

MURDER IN MEXICO

THE ASSASSINATION OF LEON TROTSKY

GENERAL SANCHEZ SALAZAR

with the collaboration of Julian Gorkin

MURDER IN MEXICO is the first inside story of the most notorious of all the G.P.U. murders, the assassination, on August 20th, 1940, by an agent of the G.P.U. at Coyoacan in Mexico of Leon Trotsky.

General Salazar, the narrator of the story, was the Chief of the Mexican Secret Service who was responsible for Trotsky's safety, and who not only apprehended and interrogated the assassin, but also investigated the circumstances surrounding the previous attempt on Trotsky's life made three months earlier.

Not the least part of this book's fascination is the delightfully unconscious self-portrait which emerges of the simple soldier turned detective. General Salazar was no Sherlock Holmes; and the story gains in interest from the very fact that it is told unvarnished, simply—even naïvely. Here is a wonderful picture of Trotsky's "fortress life," surrounded by his faithful—and one unfaithful—henchmen; surrounded too by a feeling of inescapable doom. The author explains the strangely contradictory facts that emerged in connection with the first attempt at assassination; reveals the net of intrigue woven by the Communists throughout Mexico; tells excitingly of the chase

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after the famous painter, David Alfaro Siqueiros, alleged accomplice of the eventual assassin, Jason-Mornard; lays bare the lengths to which Soviet agents were prepared to go to secure the assassin's escape from prison and, failing this, to falsify the evidence at the trial.

To this astonishing record Julian Gorkin, the famous Spanish Republican fighter, provides a valuable political commentary, setting the "murder in Mexico" against the wide background of the Stalinist determination to crush all opposition everywhere in the world. Mr. Gorkin helps to make a true story which is both more exciting *and* stranger than fiction, a historical record of great importance as well.

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TROTSKY'S ASSASSIN

MURDER IN MEXICO

The Assassination of Leon Trotsky

by

GENERAL LEANDRO A. SANCHEZ SALAZAR

Ex-Chief of Secret Service of the Mexican Police

with the collaboration of

JULIAN GORKIN

London

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NOTE

The Introduction, Chapter VI, and the whole of Part III of this book were written by Julian Gorkin, who is also responsible for the footnotes throughout.

PREFACE

DOUBTLESS there will be many writers who, far better qualified than I, will tell the story of the dark tragedy, which took place in pleasant Coyoacan, a suburb of Mexico City. The central figure of this tragic event was the Russian ex-Army leader, Leo Davidovitch Bronstein—Leon Trotsky—who was ignominiously murdered in the afternoon of August 20th, 1940. But none of these writers will be able to say: "I am recounting what I have seen, what I have carefully investigated step by step, as the events took place." These events start with the attack on the victim's fortress-refuge, in the early hours of May 24th, and finish with the capture of the well-known painter, David Alfaro Siqueiros. There were three men chiefly responsible for the carrying out of this brutal crime: the actual assassin, Mercader, *alias* Frank Jacson, *alias* Jacques Mornard-Vandendreschd, *alias* Salvador Torkof, etc., the "French Jew," unfortunately never captured, and Siqueiros. No other writer who attempts the task will do so with the same emotion as I, for, after having taken part in the drama as it was enacted, I must now re-live, one by one, its tragic episodes.

Destiny ordained that there should be a gap in my long career as a soldier to allow me to occupy the post of the Mexican Chief of Secret Police. I threw myself into this work with great enthusiasm. Police investigations thrilled me. I realised that I had the makings of a good detective, and, with the loyal collaboration of my assistants, soon got used to the work and devoted all my energy to it. And thus it fell to my lot to investigate the final tragedy of Don Leon, as, with respect and appreciation, I called Trotsky.

When President Cardenas left office, the gap of which I have spoken was closed, and I again took my place in the Army. After the many adventures and dangers through which we had passed together, it will be easily understood that I took leave of my colleagues with emotion and regret, but at least we had the satisfaction of having carried out our duty.

I wish to make it clear that I am not a writer. I speak the simple and direct language of the soldier. This might make me afraid that my readers would find the account tedious if the facts were not so strange and exciting in themselves that it needs no more than their simple narration to hold the interest to the end. You will find not the slightest deviation from the truth, for the book's chief merit lies in the fact that it is a documented history of the great drama in which I was called upon to act as official witness.

In order to give a complete picture, this account requires some comments and explanations, made by a responsible person who is capable of setting events against their proper background and of establishing responsibility for them. No one is more qualified to do this than Julian Gorkin, the Socialist militant of long-standing, who, for reasons which he himself will explain, participated for many years in Communist activities. He has thus an accurate knowledge of the procedures of the régime which, without doubt, armed the hand of Trotsky's assassin. I thank him cordially for his valuable collaboration.

GENERAL LEANDRO A. SANCHEZ SALAZAR,

INTRODUCTION

IT was in the car which was taking me from New York to Mexico that I read, on the morning of May 25th, 1940, the stop-press announcement of the first attempt against the life of Leon Trotsky. I was moved, but not surprised. I had followed the sombre Russian drama from the beginning. I was present at its early stages in Moscow itself, and I knew that the old Bolshevik leader had been marked down for death for a long time. He knew it himself, none better.

Stalin, having destroyed all opposition in Russia and having had almost all the leaders of the old Bolshevik guard executed, could not allow his principal adversary, the most dangerous of all, to continue to live. The only thing which could not be foreseen was the moment in which he would have killed him.

It seemed that that moment had come. "The Jackal of the Kremlin," as Trotsky had christened him after his pact with Hitler, knew that the U.S.S.R. would soon have to face grave perils. And in what a situation! With the political leaders and the military General Staff decapitated, on the charge (an infamous calumny) of having done what he himself was preparing to do a little later.

Stalin's responsibilities had been, and continued to be, overwhelming. He must silence for ever the accusing and resounding voice of Trotsky. Although living thousands of miles away, Trotsky was a veritable obsession with him. Stalin hated him with a deadly hatred, such as he had never felt for anyone else. His other adversaries, who had remained in Russia, had capitulated one after another, and had then consented to accuse themselves and gone to their deaths as though to the supreme liberation. This one,

however, the most gifted, the most brilliant, the real chief after Lenin by virtue of his ability, not only vigorously defended himself, but fiercely attacked. So long as he continued to live, the dictator's triumph would never be complete. Trotsky would not let him concentrate his thoughts, issue his orders, feel himself the absolute master, sleep calmly, smoke his pipe in peace. Stalin had created a hell for himself, and this terrible enemy, in spite of the distance, fanned the flames night and day.

And, in addition, was he not writing Stalin's biography? Was he not exposing him to all the world exactly as he was, coarse, brutal, crafty, full of contradictions—precisely when he was going to need more than ever all his power and prestige? Trotsky must be prevented from finishing his book! The fateful hour had struck. The order which the G.P.U. had been awaiting for a long time, had come.

Trotsky had on this occasion miraculously escaped death, but it was clear that only a short respite had been accorded him by fate. Whatever he might do, his days were numbered. A terrible battle with death awaited him. How and from where would it come? More than death itself, this terrible uncertainty obsessed him.

I found an atmosphere of intense emotion in the Mexican capital. The last act of a great historic drama, that of the Russian revolution devouring itself, was being played out in the hand-to-hand struggle between Stalin and Trotsky, begun in Moscow on the death of Lenin.

By what force of circumstances was Mexico serving as background for the last act of the drama? Trotsky had entitled the last chapter in his autobiography written at Prinkipo, "The Planet without a Visa." But for him as for many other castaways, the planet had a visa: Mexico, the Mexico of President Lazaro Cardenas. In a confused and agitated world, whose material and moral values were in

full dissolution, the Michoacan general, tempered in the fire of Mexican revolutions, appeared to us other Europeans as the guardian of the right of asylum.

Cardenas not only wished to protect the life of his most illustrious guest, but to save the honour of his country and the independence of its institutions against the criminal interference of a foreign police force. To that end, he had brought the whole of the Mexican police force into action to clear up the circumstances of this attempt against Trotsky's life, and was apparently himself directing the enquiry. In order to assassinate Trotsky, Stalin had at one and the same time to overcome Cardenas' precautions and to violate Mexican sovereignty. Hence the fever which was apparent everywhere.

The newspapers gave up whole pages to the affair. In political circles, cinemas and cafés, all conversation hinged on this subject. Everything else—including the war—seemed of secondary importance. Trotsky himself did much to keep the general interest at fever heat. Doubtless judging that the Mexican authorities could not thoroughly understand the political side of the matter, he filled the Press with articles on Stalinist policy, on the activity of the Communist Parties and in particular the Mexican Communist Party, and on the functioning of the G.P.U. He endeavoured to enlighten opinion and to direct the efforts of the police.

I followed all this with great interest, but as a simple spectator. I had not then the least intention of writing a book—either alone or in collaboration with anyone—on this period of the life of the Bolshevik leader.

As soon as the interest aroused by the attack started to die down a little, I received several invitations from some of Trotsky's immediate collaborators asking me to visit him in his fortress-house at Coyoacan. I declined them. I did so for political reasons, in spite of the interest which being in

direct touch with Trotsky at that moment could hold for me. Knowing his character and his opinions on the Civil War which had just taken place in Spain, and in which I had played some part, I was convinced that an interview could have no other result than to create a painful situation.

I am not, and have never been, a Trotskyist, despite unscrupulous assertions to the contrary. I found myself at Trotsky's side—nor do I regret it—during the struggle against the bureaucratisation of the Soviet régime and of the Communist International, but without giving him my personal adherence or joining the Trotskyist faction. And in 1929 I decided to break with Bolshevism, to which I had given ten years of my life, and go back to democratic and libertarian Socialism, to which I still remain faithful.

Nevertheless, I maintained a correspondence with Trotsky when he arrived in Turkey after his expulsion from Russia. I translated into Spanish the works which he wrote at this period. Later, I published some of his articles in the newspaper which I edited at Barcelona during the first year of the Civil War. But our relations had become cold and even strained. Nevertheless, when he was notified of his expulsion from Norway, and before Mexico had generously opened its doors to him, I took steps, in conjunction with my friend and comrade, Andres Nin, to get permission for him to live in Catalonia, under the protection of our Party. Without being Trotskyists, we considered that it was an elementary duty to offer refuge to the old persecuted revolutionary, as we had already done to a great number of other exiled Europeans.

But the Catalanian authorities were not willing to accept such a risk. There can be no doubt in fact, that, had he come to Catalonia, he would have been assassinated three or four years sooner, as was Nin, and as other comrades and myself

came within a hair's-breadth of being at the time of the monstrous trial which the G.P.U. staged against us.

What a paradoxical situation was ours! Whilst Stalin was trying to have us assassinated under the accusation of Trotskyism—as though this could be an offence in Spain!—Trotsky and his friends directed a violent polemic against us, accusing us of lack of foresight and revolutionary daring. They thought they had the right to demand of us, a handful of sincere men, to change the course of events and the balance of forces in Spain and in the world. To such a degree were the judgments of the veteran Trotsky arbitrary and absolute, in spite of his great talent.

Why see him under such conditions? The interview would have been painful and would perhaps have led to a rupture of all personal relations, which I wished to avoid at such a moment.

What was to be foreseen happened in the end: his assassination three months after the first attempt. The G.P.U. had proved the stronger. Stalin triumphed. This death, and the circumstances which surrounded it, forced me to abandon my attitude of simple spectator. In common with the French Socialist, Marceau Pivert, with whom I had a close friendship, I publicly announced my indignant protest.

Then I set about discovering the truth. I got in touch with the judge in charge of the investigation, with the chief of the Mexican secret police and also with the two doctors to whom had been confided the task of studying the personality of the assassin. . . . Why should I hesitate to say it? I offered them my enthusiastic collaboration.

I have never been attracted by police work, for I have too often been its victim, but in these circumstances my disinterested aid was a duty. I took a deep interest in the enquiry. It was, in fact, really engrossing, for it consisted of a battle against Stalinism and its methods. I was only

continuing a struggle started at the time of my break with the Comintern in 1929, a struggle which had already cost me so much bitterness. As will be seen, it was not yet finished.

I have succeeded in assembling the most complete documentation possible, thanks above all to the goodwill of Colonel, now General, Leandro A. Sanchez Salazar, ex-chief of the Mexican secret police, to whom fell the task of directing the investigation. This documentation comprises several hundred official reports, without counting photographs, newspaper cuttings and articles on the subject. We undertook, the General and I, to publish this book as it is presented here: he is the author of the simple account of the facts, and I of the commentaries and conclusions, as well as of the explanatory notes.

I must add that a very curious situation arose concerning this documentation. During the trial, which ended by Trotsky's assassin being condemned to the maximum penalty under Mexican law—twenty years of penal servitude—his lawyer, a notorious Communist, expressed his surprise on several occasions that the principal items had disappeared. The judges did not need them to condemn the assassin, whose crime was obvious. On the other hand, the Mexican Press had published on several occasions news of the complete disappearance of the records relative to the attack on Trotsky's house and to his assassination. The G.P.U. were accused of having caused their disappearance. This accusation was not refuted: first, because it would have revealed the G.P.U.'s presence in Mexico and, secondly, because they knew when to keep quiet on the subject. I declare here for the first time: These documents have been in my possession for more than six years. They act as guarantee for the statements contained in this book. I have deposited them in a safe place. It is unnecessary to say that all precautions have

been taken to prevent them from falling into criminal hands.

The acquiring and keeping of them have, incidentally, almost cost me my life. After the grave dangers which I ran in Spain and which I escaped by a miracle—on two occasions my execution had been announced and even described—those which I encountered in Mexico proved to be no less severe.

On September 21st, 1940, I was to be present at the Palace of Fine Arts in the Mexican capital, on the occasion of a meeting of protest against the assassination of Trotsky. As I neared the building, some of my friends ran to warn me that four well-armed Communists were waiting for me at the entrance with the intention of assassinating me. Another minute and I should have fallen riddled with bullets. During the month of November in the same year, I was the object of several attempts at murder.

I lived at that time at Coyoacan with some friends in the house of the painter, Diego Rivera, where previously Trotsky had lived until his rupture with the famous artist. The G.P.U. must have learned that I possessed these famous documents. They made every effort to destroy them and to dispose of me at the same time. On two occasions, seven agents of the G.P.U. tried to get into the house—once by posing as police officers and another time as journalists and photographers.

Some time afterwards, two men came in a car to fetch me “on behalf of Albert Goldman,” the New York lawyer for Trotsky’s widow. Unfortunately for them, I had arranged with him our manner of communication and this prevented me from falling into the trap. For, of course, they were agents of the G.P.U. Another time, in a lonely street in Coyoacan, the same seven people mentioned above tried to surround me and force me into a car standing with its

engine running. I succeeded in escaping, thanks only to sang-froid and diligence.

Some years later, on the occasion of another meeting, about a hundred Communists raided the hall, seriously wounded me (my head was split open by blows from a cudgel) and would have killed me but for the courage shown by my friends. During the fight, my comrade, Enrique Aldroher (Gironella), also had his head split open. The attackers had a good dozen wounded, and sixty-two of them were arrested.

Such a life is not entirely free from excitement. That has done nothing to modify my thoughts and feelings or my resolution to continue the struggle against Stalinism and its methods.

Circumstances due to the war have delayed the publication of this book for several years. We were in course of preparing it when the rupture of the Hitler-Stalin Pact and the invasion of Russia by the German Army occurred. Stalin thus became, in spite of himself, an ally of the democratic governments, and Russia one of the principal factors in the fight against Nazi militarism. I was given to understand by those in high places that the publication of the book was not opportune. Even the book by Trotsky on Stalin, published at the same time, was only allowed to come out of the cellars where it was hidden, a year after the end of hostilities.

Like all products of the earth, truth is subject to the rhythm of the seasons; it must await its proper moment for germination. It seems that this moment has arrived: the truth concerning the murder of Trotsky has ceased to be inopportune. Let us take advantage of the fact to make it known.

This book, the absolute objectivity of which we guarantee, constitutes a striking demonstration of the methods

employed by the unfortunately celebrated G.P.U., rechristened N.K.V.D.¹ Whatever be the name by which it is called, it poisons the air we breathe.

JULIAN GORKIN.

MEXICO, D.F.

July 1st, 1947.

¹ Now renamed M.V.D.—TRANSLATOR.

"To choose the victim, carefully prepare the blow, satisfy an implacable vengeance, then go to bed. . . . There is nothing sweeter in the world."

(Stalin to Dzerjinski and Kamenev in the course of a conversation held in the spring of 1923.)

"You think that Stalin is worrying himself trying to find a reply to your arguments? You are mistaken. He is only considering in what manner he can suppress you without danger to himself."

(Kamenev to Trotsky in 1923.)

"He would have got rid of you at any moment since 1924 if he had not feared reprisals from the youth section in the form of terrorist activities. That is why Stalin has decided to start by destroying the framework of the opposition and then to kill you afterwards, when he is sure of being able to do so with impunity."

(Zinoviev to Trotsky in 1925.)

"If we die suddenly, let it be known that it is the work of Stalin."

(Zinoviev and Kamenev in letters placed in safe keeping after their rupture with Stalin in 1925.)

PART ONE

THE STRUGGLE WITH DEATH

A Real or Staged Attack?

ON May 23rd, 1940, I returned home towards eleven o'clock in the evening. After having skimmed through the day's news, taken a few sips of tea and smoked a cigarette, I went to bed and immediately fell into a deep sleep. Suddenly the telephone rang. I was used to frequent calls from my subordinates, even during the night. Mechanically, I lifted the receiver. It was the head of the Secret Service Section.

"Colonel, Trotsky's house was attacked a few minutes ago."

Although accustomed to the most unexpected and sensational news, I started, and replied immediately:

"Tell Estrada and Galindo to go at once to Coyoacan, to Trotsky's house. I shall be there in an instant."

These men were the Deputy Assistant Chief of the Secret Service and the Chief Detective Officer, respectively.

It was about four o'clock in the morning. I dressed rapidly and buckled on my revolver-belt. I raced down the stairs two or three at a time, and, jumping into my car, rushed off at top speed from the Colony of Doctors, where I lived, to the home of Trotsky in Coyoacan. I well knew the famous revolutionary's house, situated at the angle of Vienna Street and Morelos Street, having been there several times. By order of my superiors, its protection was one of my constant preoccupations.

It had rained heavily the night before and the streets were muddy, particularly Vienna Street, at that time neither paved

nor asphalted. Dawn had not yet broken, but the barking of dogs and the crowing of cocks announced the approach of day. The attack, which had taken place half an hour previously, had interrupted the calm of this peaceful quarter. Trotsky's house was the last on the left.

I pulled up sharply, jumped out of the car and went towards the hut occupied by the police whose job it was to guard the outside of the house. I found them all terrified and without arms.

"What happened?" I asked, somewhat irritated and hardly acknowledging their salute.

They all started to talk at once:

"We were attacked, Colonel. There were twenty of them at least. Some of them wore military uniforms. How could we suspect their intentions? They've fired about three hundred shots into the interior."

"Do you know whether anyone has been killed or wounded?"

"We know nothing, Colonel. Nothing!"

At that moment Estrada and Galindo arrived, as well as several of our agents. Some little time afterwards, General José Manuel Nunez, Chief of the Police and my immediate superior, also arrived, having been informed on my orders. We anxiously asked ourselves: "Have they killed Trotsky?"

We approached the gate of the fortress-house. It was a summer residence, built at the end of the last century, simply constructed. It was "T" shaped. The iron railings which had surrounded it had been replaced by a high wall of concrete, surmounted by battlemented towers, which now made it into a veritable fortress. This gate, the high stern walls and the machine-gun towers, gave it the air of a prison rather than a dwelling-place. What precautions the old revolutionary had had to take to protect his life! And, in spite of all, perhaps he was dead at that moment.



TROTSKY'S 'FORTRESS' AT COYOACAN

We rang the bell at the same time as we knocked at the great metallic door. It was immediately opened a little, just enough to allow us to explain who we were by giving our names and showing our badges. It was only after we had done this that the door was opened completely and we were allowed to go into the garden. This, although surrounded by walls, was the only pleasant spot in the place. Large trees with luxuriant foliage shaded part of it. The lawn was well cared for and plants and flowers brightened the surroundings. Cactuses, the primitive and wild plants which Trotsky loved so much, abounded. All this gave us the impression of a little corner of paradise in the interior of hell.

"What has happened?"

This question was addressed to the secretaries and bodyguards of Trotsky. They were all young, vigorous men. They had kept their revolvers in their hands as though to defend themselves against an invisible enemy. Nevertheless, their attitude surprised me. In spite of their arms and of a certain hostile reserve in their action, they remained astonishingly calm. In addition, they shut themselves up in a silence not less strange, contenting themselves by replying to my questions in monosyllables: yes, no, yes, no. . . . One thing at least was immediately clear: Trotsky was alive. No one was dead or wounded. That quietened our fears.

Esteban, Trotsky's grandson, recently arrived from France, was playing quietly in the garden, beside a flight of steps leading to his room, which communicated with that of his grandparents. He was about eleven or twelve years old, and he bore a strong resemblance to Trotsky. His left foot was bandaged.

"What has happened to him?" I asked.

"He was grazed by a bullet," replied one of the secretaries.

"Fortunately, it is nothing serious."

Esteban looked at us for a moment and then calmly

resumed his game. I asked to see Trotsky, who soon arrived accompanied by his wife, Nathalie Sedova. The old Bolshevik leader was in pyjamas, over which he had slipped a dressing-gown. They greeted me with great friendliness. This was quite usual with them, but they preserved a surprising calm. One might have thought that nothing had happened and that everything had turned out to be a false alarm.

Trotsky smiled, with his eyes bright and clear behind his tortoiseshell glasses—eyes always keen and piercing—his glance sharp and penetrating, with a jesting, sarcastic, slightly Mephistophelean air. He was of medium height, strong, and carried himself well. His mouth was large, his lips thin, the lower one slightly prominent. His hair, his moustache and his small, pointed beard were grey, almost white. His hair seemed a little untidy, thrown back from his forehead, with stray locks falling at the sides. For the rest, his profile is well known. His features, still young, firm, energetic, without a single crease in the strong brow, compelled attention. Only two slight wrinkles were visible at the juncture of his lips.

Nathalie Sedova, for her part, remained unmoved, with a modest and reserved air. Her face, which must once have been beautiful, with delicate features, expressed great sweetness. Sadness rather than the years had prematurely aged her. All the members of her family had perished.

When they had received the news of the death of their last son, Léon Sedov, they had locked themselves in their room for several days, unwilling to see anyone. Trotsky wrote an obituary article at the time, in which he forced himself to appear objective, but which rose like a heart-rending lament. The lion had received the saddest and cruellest of wounds. But he recovered by means of his super-human energy. Nathalie, on the other hand, had

greatly aged since that time. What a contrast between the two beings! He, energetic and authoritative; she, sweet, calm and almost resigned. At such a moment as this, the contrast seemed even more striking.

But why were they so calm? How was it possible after the terrible danger they had just experienced? The life which they had led, hazardous, troubled, full of risks and perils, had it rendered them utterly impervious to fear? Could nothing shake them? Or perhaps . . .? A suspicion crossed my mind. I remained undecided for a moment, looking at them both. Had there really been an attempt on their lives, or was it a put-up job?

Trotsky invited me into his study. All the rooms in the house were furnished in a very summary fashion. Not a sign of ostentation or luxury. The only things in abundance were books, collections of newspapers and periodicals, records. Everything in order and in its place. Trotsky's study was the best room in the house. It led off from the dining-room. There was a large, ordinary wooden table. On one side the dictaphone. Without being disturbed by anyone, Trotsky used to dictate there the enormous correspondence which he kept up with the whole world in four or five languages, his political articles, his books. . . .

When we were seated, Trotsky commenced in a calm voice, in fairly correct Spanish:

"Nathalie and I were sleeping in our bedroom, which is between the study and our grandson's room, when we were suddenly awakened by a brisk firing. My first impression was that it was the noise of crackers or fireworks, such as are used here for religious feasts. But I soon realised that they were reports made by guns. We quickly threw ourselves under our beds. Nathalie pushed me towards the south-east corner of the room and forced me to lie flat on the floor; she remained standing for a few moments, as though to protect

me by her body, until I made her lie down beside me. It is certain that that is what saved us both. We were able to see that they were shooting towards the interior of the room from the door of Esteban's room, the door of my study, and from the bathroom and our bedroom window all at the same time. A real cross-fire. We remained stretched out on the floor until it ceased, and then saw that they had placed an incendiary bomb at the door which communicated with our grandson's room. We thought for a moment that the little boy had been killed. . . ."

I carefully observed the old revolutionary while he talked. His voice was calm, but firm and energetic; he displayed not the slightest emotion while recounting what had happened. He went on:

"The assailants numbered about twenty and were armed with machine-guns. Doubtless they thought they had killed us. When the firing ceased, my wife and I hurried to extinguish the fire which was already burning the door and floor-boards, where they had placed the 'thermos' bomb containing incendiary matter. From my grandson's room they had also thrown another, but it fell outside the window which gives on to the garden, and burnt part of the lawn. There is no doubt that the attackers intended, not only to kill us, but to set fire to the house."

"With the object of getting rid of all the traces?" I asked.

"With that object and above all of getting rid of my archives. They had already tried to do the same thing in Paris, by melting down a steel door with a blow-pipe and destroying papers which weighed 150 pounds. This time they had even greater reason to destroy my records, for everyone knows, and the G.P.U. better than anyone, that I am writing a biography of Stalin. That was why they had brought several incendiary bombs with them."

I listened without making any comments, but I thought to

myself: "So many attackers, so many fire-arms, even bombs, and nothing has happened to them! All that is very strange!"

Trotsky continued:

"Our first thought was for Esteban, whom we feared must have been killed, but he ran towards us almost as soon as the firing ceased. The child had been surprised, like us, by the attack from the assailants, but nothing had happened to him because he, too, had thrown himself on the floor and instinctively hidden under the bed.

"Shortly afterwards we were joined by my colleagues and guards. We saw then that they had broken down the doors. How had they managed to get into the grounds? We went straight away to the entrance, where we noted the disappearance of Robert Sheldon Harte—Bob, as we all affectionately called him. Surely the assailants had taken him away with them. . . ."

We then went into the garden. Trotsky, who hardly went out of this fortress surrounded by high walls—he who followed with his brain the events of the whole world—carefully tended each plant. . . . Rather than the dwelling of a revolutionary, it resembled the residence of a peaceful bourgeois, a *rentier*. If there had not been all these precautions . . .

"Do you suspect anyone or any group of being the author of this attempt?" I asked him.

"I most certainly do!" he replied in a very decided tone of voice. "Come. . . ."

He put his right arm on my shoulder and slowly led me towards his cage of rabbits. One of his favourite occupations was to feed his rabbits himself. He stopped, glanced all round him to make sure that we were alone, and, placing his right hand near to his mouth, as though wishing to make the confidence more secret, he said in a low voice and with deep conviction:

"The author of the attack is Joseph Stalin, through the medium of the G.P.U."

I looked at him stupefied. I should explain that this reply took me completely aback, for I had hoped to hear the names of some persons who might have had a hand in the affair. My first suspicion became a certitude. Again I said to myself, "It's a put-up job! There's not the least doubt of it."

Trotsky added after a moment: "Take steps against the Stalinists by arresting the most conspicuous Communists, and you won't be long in discovering the culprits."

I made no reply, but I was more and more convinced that the old revolutionary was trying to turn my attention from the real path.

I asked his permission to begin my investigations. I proceeded, in the first case, to examine the rooms occupied by Trotsky and his wife and their grandson. I counted up to seventy-three holes in the doors, windows, and walls, including two in the bed of the old revolutionary and one in that of his wife, with a perforation of the mattress. It seemed impossible, if they had been in the room at the moment of the attack, that they could have come through safe and sound. Could I believe, on the other hand, all they had just told me concerning the cross-fire of the attackers? In firing thus, from all sides at the same time, would they not have killed each other?

In spite of the complete silence into which they seemed to have retired—on the order of Trotsky himself, I thought—I wished to examine again the secretaries and guards of the house. This was the preliminary interrogation; later, if necessary, there would be an official examination. Robert Sheldon Harte, who had been on guard at the door that night, had, in fact, disappeared. Had they abducted him, or had he himself voluntarily formed one of the band of attackers? Trotsky and his collaborators appeared to lean

towards the first hypothesis, although possessing no proof to support it. It was a point of prime importance to be elucidated, but later. The other members of his staff were: Harold Robins, chief of the guards, Otto Schuessler (German), Walter Kerley and Charles Cornell, all acting as both secretaries and guards; and Jack Cooper, guard only.

"There is no one in the house but you?" I asked.

"Yes, the servants. And then . . ."

"And then?"

"The Rosmers. Alfred and Marguerite Rosmer, of French nationality."

They were old friends of Trotsky, it was explained to me, whom he had known in Paris during the First World War, before his expulsion from France. Alfred Rosmer was also a writer and journalist and an old revolutionary, a partisan of Trotskyism. They had arrived from Paris a few months previously, bringing Esteban with them, and they had shortly to return to France.

"Of what does your work in the house consist?" I asked the members of Trotsky's staff.

It consisted, above all, according to their declarations, in guarding Trotsky's life, even at the risk of their own.

"How is it then, that you did nothing to defend him against his attackers?"

Otto said that his machine-gun had been blocked. All mentioned the surprise which the attack had given them and the speed with which it had been carried out. In addition, the attackers had been numerous, very well armed and perfectly organised.

I was tempted to arrest them all on the spot. But I contained myself, and decided to proceed with calm.

The servants numbered three: Carmen Palma, cook, Belen Estrada, parlourmaid, and Melquiades Benitez, handy man.

The two women particularly seemed a prey to terror, the cook much more so than the other: she trembled and hardly dared to look me in the face. I considered that these were the most suspect and decided to arrest them. Their interrogation would perhaps put me on the track I was looking for, particularly as I was convinced that the whole attack had been staged.

Was this only my personal conviction? To make sure, I exchanged a few rapid impressions with my colleagues.

"What is your opinion?" I asked Estrada and Galindo.

"To our mind," they replied, "it is certainly a put-up job."

The precautions adopted by Trotsky and his guards had, I repeat, transformed their house into an impregnable fortress. The interior system of defence could not have been more complete. It was obvious that the old revolutionary, feeling his life threatened and knowing better than anyone the strength and cunning of his enemies, had spared no effort.

The main door was reinforced by two bars. By lifting one of them the door could be opened a few inches. A strong electric light lit up the space necessary to recognise and identify the visitor. If he could be trusted absolutely, the guard on duty in the tower, whence he not only controlled both the street and the garden at the same time, but could also fire with his machine-gun on whoever was there, opened the door by means of an electric spring. Thus, with this system, for the door to be opened completely the agreement of two guards was necessary.

"How, under these conditions, were the assailants able to enter the house?" I asked, perplexed.

"It is not yet possible precisely to say," replied Otto. "We suppose that Sheldon recognised one of the attackers, or took him for a friend."

I kept silent and continued my investigations. There was also an alarm apparatus connecting the various parts of the house. And on the wall which surrounded the garden was installed quite a network of electric wires, placed so that it was almost impossible to scale it without touching them. Any contact started an alarm bell ringing and lit up, at the same time, some small electric bulbs on a board in the guard tower. This board not only signalled the danger, but also the exact spot whence it came. It must be added that the whole system linked up with the police hut occupied by the exterior guards of the house. How then doubt the complicity of some of Trotsky's guards, or at least of Robert Sheldon Harte, who was on guard at the gate at the moment of the attack? All considered, the suspicion that the attack had been staged became stronger and stronger within me.

Two cars had disappeared from Trotsky's house, a Ford and a Dodge. Doubtless the assailants had used them to escape in.

"Who kept the ignition keys to the cars?" I asked.

I was told that the keys were always kept in the cars as a further precaution in case of danger. Very good! But the attackers could not have known this. How, then, had they had the idea of escaping in the cars? Who had told them where to find the keys? Sheldon, perhaps?

One of the cars was discovered not far away, at the corner of Vienna Street and San Pedro Street. It was the Ford, an old car.

As I have already said, the district was muddy. The car had stuck in the mud. If they had not pulled it out of the mire and used it as a means of escape, it must surely have been through nervousness, for we managed to extricate it without difficulty. It was clear that the assailants had wanted to cross the River Churubusco, behind Trotsky's house, and go in a northerly direction, at least those who were in this car. I

gave orders that all tracks were to be followed, all possible clues to be investigated.

On the bank of the River Churubusco I found a rope ladder with wooden stays, and a grappling-iron at one end. They had no doubt brought it in case they failed to enter by the main door. Not far from the car we also found an electric saw, of 110 to 125 volts; an iron bar, known under the picturesque name of "holy child," which the Mexican malefactors generally use to open doors or to stun their victims with; two of the Mauser guns, taken from the police guarding the outside of Trotsky's house, numerous .45-calibre cartridges, and an automatic loader for a "Thompson" pistol.

Shortly afterwards I was advised that in Merida Street, a good distance from the attack, an abandoned Dodge car had been discovered. I went immediately. It was the second car which had disappeared from Trotsky's garage. Inside were a pair of blue trousers, a jacket of the same stuff, two polished leather-belts, one black and one coffee-coloured, a leather cartridge-holder containing cartridges for a .35-calibre special gun and an axe with a cover over the blade. All these objects might prove very valuable to the investigation. For it was certain that the attackers, or at least some of them, had been disguised as policemen.

I returned to Trotsky's house. The idea that the attack had been staged was growing on me, but it was not possible to base my hypothesis on solid grounds. Everything had happened so quickly. It was a question of an attack in which many people, twenty at least, had been involved, which did not help to facilitate the enquiry. And was it really possible to get twenty people organised to carry out such a plot? There was no doubt about it; if it was not a question of a sham attack organised by Trotsky himself and his colleagues in order to throw the responsibility on

to the Stalinists, it could only be an attack organised by the latter. Trotsky had no other enemies in the country, since, in accordance with the agreement made with the Government of General Cardenas, he had never interfered in political affairs inside the country. Since his arrival in Mexico, the only country in the world which dared offer him asylum, the Mexican Communists had used him as a target. They had never missed an opportunity of attacking him, of demanding his expulsion, but had always clashed with the firm resolve of the President of the Republic.

I had to follow two possibilities at the same time: that of a sham attack and that of a real one organised by the Stalinists. I knew—and Trotsky himself had confirmed it on numerous occasions—that the G.P.U. carefully avoids compromising militant Communists occupying responsible posts in its crimes. It works more or less independently of the Communist Party, using for preference little-known elements, or those apparently detached from the Party. However, Trotsky had himself just incited me to arrest those militant Communists most in the public view, among whom we should discover, according to him, the authors of the attack. With what object in view had he said that? He knew perfectly well that I could not arrest anyone without proof, or without an assumption of guilt more or less well founded on fact.

If it was a question of a feigned attack, then my task would be relatively easy. But if it was the G.P.U. who had organised it, I was going to have to deal with people who were very clever and who were well used to this sort of exploit. In this case I had a very arduous task in front of me. And, in view of Trotsky's personality, public opinion throughout the world would follow the enquiry step by step. Never before, in the course of my police career, had I had to deal with such a serious case.

I made haste to begin the interrogations, in the hope that they would put me on the right track. The police responsible for the exterior guard brought me some details of the manner in which the attack had taken place.

Shortly after three o'clock in the morning they had seen two men arrive, dressed in police uniforms, and another wearing a military uniform, with the rank of lieutenant. They thought that it was an inspection ordered by the police headquarters. The new arrivals approached them amiably:

"How's it going, comrades?"

"Nothing to report," replied the policemen.

At that moment, they noticed that other individuals were prowling round the post. They wanted to go to see what was happening, but the two dressed as policemen and the lieutenant drew their revolvers and cried:

"Put your hands up, you sons of —!"

They could offer no resistance, and allowed themselves to be disarmed. They were led inside the post. They found there three other assailants, two dressed as policemen, and the third in a military uniform. The latter, who wore a raincoat over his uniform, had a major's badge on his cap. They had awakened the policemen who were asleep in the hut and, having disarmed them, had forced them rapidly to dress. They had then tied them up, with their hands behind their backs. The one wearing the major's badge had cried out:

"Long live Almazan, comrades!¹ Down with General Nunez! We've taken all the police posts."

They left the post, taking all the arms which they could find there. The guards, firmly tied, remained under the

¹ General Juan Andreu Almazan was at that time prospective candidate for the Presidency of the Republic against General Manuel Avila Camacho and was considered as the reactionary candidate.

surveillance of an individual dressed in civilian clothes, who had arrived in the meantime. Shortly afterwards they heard brisk firing and presumed that it was a machine-gun. When the firing stopped after a few minutes, the man who was watching them disappeared. They then saw the assailants leave, taking with them one of Trotsky's guards, whom they knew by the name of Bob.

It was very important to clear up the following point: "Did they appear to be taking him as a prisoner, or did he go with them of his own free will?"

The police officer Abel Gonzalez Ortiz, who had seen them more clearly than the others, declared:

"They were not ill-treating him. He seemed to be going with them quite quietly and of his own free will."

"Which of them took the cars? Did you see?"

"We could not distinguish. We only saw that some of them got into the cars and drove off rapidly."

"How did they manage to get into the house?"

The same police officer replied:

"I imagined, on seeing Bob go away with them, that it was he who had let them in. . . . It was he who was on guard at that moment. It's certain that if they had not had an accomplice inside, it would have been impossible for them to enter the house."

I accorded a certain importance to the declaration of Jesus Rodriguez Casas, sub-officer of the 17th Company of police and chief of the guard for Trotsky's house. He had occupied this post for three years and four months—that is to say, since the arrival in the country of the Russian Revolutionary.

In the beginning the station consisted of thirty-three men. When it was seen that the number provoked continual protests from the Communists, who pretended that the guard of the Russian refugee cost the country too much, it was reduced to eight men, and finally it was settled at ten.

They were split into two groups, each group going on duty for twenty-four hours at a stretch. In addition to the arms they carried with them, they were given five guns, five bandoliers, and 250 cartridges. The Government of General Cardenas thus assured, as far as possible, the continuously threatened security of the ex-chief of the Bolsheviks, to whom the whole world had refused hospitality.

Trotsky had great confidence in Rodriguez Casas, and regarded him as a friend. He rarely went out without him at his side and often invited him to dine at his house. The sergeant also accompanied Nathalie and Esteban, who frequently went out. At the moment of the attack he was at home, off duty. As soon as he learned of it, he dressed quickly and ran at full speed to Trotsky's house. When they had told him what had happened, he said:

"It's been staged."

From the beginning he considered Sheldon's attitude suspicious. He made the following observation:

"Why did he open the gate to the assailants when it was not even opened to the police officers on duty? I was the only one who was allowed to enter the house."

I had had the cook and the parlourmaid arrested on suspicion and taken to the barracks of the mounted police, generally called *El Pocito* (The Little Well) because it was situated beside a stream near to the Colegiata where pilgrims and the faithful gathered to cross themselves as though it were holy water. *El Pocito* was, until the time of its suppression as a prison for those arrested on suspicion, the terror of delinquents. The two women whom I had had taken there were terrified. What could be the reason for it?

I had not the slightest need to exercise any pressure on them to make them talk. According to them, Trotsky had frequent conferences with his secretaries. One of these conferences, at which all Trotsky's entourage were present, as

well as the French family which was then in the house, had been held on the eve of the attack. The meeting was absolutely secret and lasted two hours and a half, from half-past three to six o'clock in the evening. After the meeting, and particularly after the meal, Otto Schuessler and Charles Cornell showed great anxiety and a certain nervousness: they continually went backwards and forwards from their room to Trotsky's study, and discreetly talked with him.

Naturally, the two women could not hear what was being said. The cook drew the parlourmaid's attention to all this coming and going. They went to bed about ten o'clock. The first shots awakened them with a start. The cook was just getting up when she saw Otto go past in pyjamas, a revolver in his hand; without saying a word, he went near the kitchen and stayed there all the time, without firing a single shot. If the assailants were enemies, why did he not shoot?

When the cook left her room, she saw all the secretaries in conversation with Trotsky in his bedroom; shortly afterwards he went into the dining-room with his revolver in his hand. All were very calm, with the exception of Otto, who showed signs of great nervousness. On seeing her, Trotsky asked:

"Has anything happened to you?"

"No, señor."

He sent her to make sure that nothing had happened to the parlourmaid, and this she hastened to do. Together they went to see the Señora Trotsky. Her nose was a little blackened by the gunpowder. When they remarked upon it, she only wiped it with her hand and smiled.

About six o'clock, the cook happened to be in the dining-room when she saw Charles Cornell enter, accompanied by Sergeant Rodriguez Casas. The latter declared to Trotsky's colleague:

"You've seen? I told you it would be very dangerous."

The two women were of the opinion that it was a put-up job organised by their master and his secretaries. If these declarations were exact, there was no longer any doubt that my first suspicion had been well founded.

I could wait no longer. I had Charles Cornell and Otto Schuessler arrested and brought to the *Pocito*. The former did no more than give a few precise details in his declaration. He was asleep when the attack took place. He was awakened by the noise of a machine-gun, and thought it was his comrades who were repelling an attack. At that moment he heard someone cry out in English:

"Don't move, and nothing will happen to you!"

He looked for his revolver, but could not find it. He then remembered that he had lent it the previous night to Harold Robins: guns were often lent to one another by the guards. He then went towards the door of his room. As soon as Harold saw him, he cried out:

"Put your head down, Charles! Don't let them see you!"

In spite of this command, he looked in the direction of the guard post and saw three individuals, two dressed in dark suits and the other in a light one. He ran to look for his rifle, with the intention of going out into the courtyard. As he was wearing light-coloured pyjamas, he quickly donned a dark coat so as not to present too easy a target to the enemy. Just as he was going out, Harold cried out to him again:

"Don't show yourself, Charles! Keep your head down!"

Without any doubt, this new order saved his life. Harold could see who was firing the machine-gun. He stayed at the door of the room, with his rifle ready to fire. He did not think that the attackers were in control of the whole house. At that moment he saw someone whom he did not know running in the yard. He fired at him with his rifle, but missed

him. He saw Otto going down from his own room to Trotsky's, and heard Harold cry out to him:

"Careful, Otto! You are in danger!"

After the firing, they all joined Harold in one of the rooms used by the duty guards.

"Can I go and have a look at the old man's room?" he asked.

"Wait until we've put out the light," replied Harold.

Having done so, they ran to the door leading into Trotsky's study. It was locked. He then went towards the yard. Neither before nor after the firing had he heard the sound of cars running. It was only afterwards that they noticed their disappearance, and also that of Sheldon.

In the meantime, my officers had discovered that the electric saw found not far from Trotsky's house had been sold by the shop "The Successors of Z. Clement," for the sum of 300 pesos, to a well-dressed person who drove a large black car, with either New York or New Jersey number-plates, they were not quite sure which. The person in question asked them to send the bill to 23 London Street at Coyoacan. When the address was checked, it was found to be false. That proved, in any case, that the preparations for the attack, and perhaps the attack itself, had been carried out with the participation of foreigners.

Hardly forty-eight hours after I had had Trotsky's two secretaries arrested, I received an urgent telephone call from General Nunez. I left the *Pocito* where I happened to be and hurried to Police Headquarters. The general briefly told me: "I have called you here to tell you that Trotsky has just sent a letter to the President of the Republic protesting against the arrest of his secretaries and his servants, and against the fact that he has been left without any means of defence. He affirms that all are innocent. The President is very annoyed about the incident and has ordered you to go

to Trotsky's house, take the guards with you and offer your apologies."

I must admit that I was very hurt on hearing this. I replied:

"I will carry out the President's order, but I insist on stating that I have never acted in a despotic manner. I must use all the means at my disposal if I am to throw light on the facts. To say the least, the case is not very clear. I admit that, up to the present, I have not been able to get on to any definite tracks. Everything seems to indicate, on the other hand, that it was a put-up job."

At the same time I received a letter from Trotsky, which he intended to bring to the attention of the public by communicating it to the Press. He said to me among other things: "The attack is not an unexpected accident that might be attributed to Dies,¹ to Diego Rivera,² etc. . . . It is not the first of its kind. If I have taken all these precautions, it is because I was expecting an attempt on my life by the G.P.U. To-day, when the attack has taken place, my friends and defenders are arrested, my friends of yesterday are suspected, but not my real enemies, well-known throughout the world."

And he added: "These tactics coincide in an amazing fashion with the plan of the assailants themselves, who cried out 'Long live Almazan!' to give the idea that the attack was an incident provoked by inside Mexican politics. Rivera, as can be seen in the Press, has been implicated in one of General Almazan's campaigns. The classic rule of the G.P.U. is: kill your enemy and throw the responsibility on

¹ President of the famous Dies Committee, appointed to enquire into anti-American activities.

² The painter Diego Rivera supported the candidature of General Almazan. He had broken off relations with Trotsky, and it was thought at one time that he was implicated in the plot.

to someone else." He then laid the blame on Vicente Lombardo Toledano and on the chief leaders of the Mexican Communist Party for the campaigns conducted against him with the object of providing political cover for the attack committed by the G.P.U. "I am absolutely sure that the arrest of my friends and collaborators is based on facts of as little value as those which concern Diego Rivera. I am sure that the enquiry has reached a deadlock. Each day which passes, each new fact, each new clue destroy all these artificial constructions and unmask the real criminals, as well as their intellectual inspirers and protectors."

And he finished his letter: "Up to now I have kept strictly silent so as not to upset the investigation. But, in view of the utterly false direction which it has taken, I reserve the right to appeal to Mexican and international opinion."

Far from helping me with my task, the Press with its sensational articles, its news and its deductions, only complicated it. I understood perfectly the public's desire for information. But I had to conduct the investigation in my own way, using whatever means I could.

Let us also add that the painter Diego Rivera, seeing his name mixed up in the affair, suddenly left the country for the U.S.A., where he started to make the most ridiculous statements. An artist of great talent, but thirsty for fame, he could not help using this occasion to draw the limelight on to himself. In spite of his rupture with Trotsky three months before, he was afraid, he said, of being himself the victim of an attack, doubtless because it was he who had taken the necessary steps to obtain a *visa* of entry into Mexico for the Russian ex-Commissar.

All this led public opinion astray, and only aggravated the difficulties of the enquiry.

About four o'clock in the afternoon and in my own car, I

took Otto and Charles back to Trotsky's house. He received me with a forced friendliness. It was only with difficulty that he contained his anger. His pointed grey beard trembled and he stroked it nervously, almost growling.

"I apologise, Don Leon, for arresting your secretaries," I said in a calm voice, with the object of soothing his anger. "After the interrogation to which I have submitted them, I am convinced of their innocence. They are worthy of your confidence."

Thereupon I informed him of the declarations made by his servants, and which, even without my suspicions, had led me to have the secretaries arrested. He showed great surprise.

"We are always holding conferences," he said. "Even at table at meal-times we discuss questions of international politics. My study, in addition, is always open to any of my collaborators. But it happens that actually on May 23rd we held no conference because I was very busy with the preparation of work intended for the U.S.A., work which I started at half-past seven in the morning and finished only at eleven o'clock at night.

"My typist, Madame Fanny Yanovitch, who usually works only three or four hours a day, remained all the time with me because of it. She works in an adjoining room, but comes into my study from time to time to fetch the dictaphone records. I work alone, and I remember that at five o'clock in the afternoon Sheldon came in to tell me that he wanted to check the alarm system. I was rather annoyed at being disturbed and said: 'It isn't possible to work with all these interruptions. Leave me, I beg you.' And he went. A little later Cooper came to see me. These are the only conversations I had that day. I remember perfectly for the reasons I have told you. There were no others."

"In that case," I told him, "your cook has lied. It would be better if you discharged her."

At first he seemed opposed to this measure, then admitted that it was necessary.

Nathalie Sedova had not been able to control her anger. She had not made any reproach, but, when I greeted her, gave me a furious look. At the same time, she kissed Otto and Charles and spoke very affectionately to them.

My mission accomplished, I withdrew. Trotsky accompanied me as far as the hall with his customary friendliness.

The idea of a sham attack began to leave me. What track should I follow now? The Communists and their sympathisers threw all their weight behind the theory of the feigned attack and the "Long live General Almazan!" They seemed too interested in diverting the enquiry and in making responsibility fall on the victim himself: Leon Trotsky. There was no doubt about it, it was towards that side that I must lead my enquiries. I was going to have to confront the best-organised and most terrible police and terrorist organisation in the world, the famous G.P.U.

II

How the G.P.U. Functions

SEVEN days after the attempt on his life, Leon Trotsky addressed a long letter to the Public Prosecutor, to the Chief of Police and to the Mexican Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Its object was to help the police enquiry as far as possible and to guide opinion. It was, in fact, Trotsky's official statement on the attack, and particularly on the working of the G.P.U. That is why I have included it here. This letter ran as follows:

"During the interrogation which I underwent on May 24th, the representative of the Public Prosecutor asked me, among other things, whom I suspected to be the instigator of the attack. I replied: Joseph Stalin! And I gave detailed explanations of the G.P.U.'s methods of organisation in foreign countries. This part of my declaration has been completely excluded from the records, doubtless for reasons of international courtesy, or perhaps on purely technical grounds. But, as the authorities are interested above all in clearing up the facts, I believe it my duty to complete my brief statement here, because, in my opinion, it is of fundamental importance for the general guidance of the enquiry.

"It must be affirmed, above all, that the attempt could have been organised only by the Kremlin, by Stalin, through the agency of the foreign section of the G.P.U. During the last few years, Stalin has shot hundreds of my friends, real or supposed. He has, in fact, exterminated the whole of my family, with the exception of myself, my wife and one of my grandsons. Abroad, he had Ignace Reiss, one of the chiefs

of the G.P.U., assassinated by his agents, because he publicly declared himself to be in favour of the ideas which I uphold. That has been established by the French police and the Swiss courts.

"The same agents of the G.P.U. who killed Ignace Reiss have dogged the steps of my son in Paris. On the night of November 7th, 1936, they invaded the buildings of the Scientific Institute of Paris and stole part of my archives. Two of my old secretaries, Erwin Wolff and Rudolf Klement, were assassinated by the agents of the G.P.U., the former in Spain and the latter in Paris. The aim of all the Moscow trials during the years 1936 and 1937 was to obtain my extradition and to put me in the hands of the G.P.U.

"The résumé of all these crimes could be considerably enlarged. All have had as their objective my physical annihilation. Behind them is Stalin. His arm is the Soviet Secret Police, with its ramifications in every country, and it is called the G.P.U. Only those persons who have some interest in obliterating the traces of the crimes can deny these facts or profess to have any doubt about them.

"I do not mean to say by the above that the possibility of the participation in the attempt by the Gestapo, Hitler's secret police, is excluded. At present, the G.P.U. and the Gestapo are to some extent in touch with each other; it is possible and even probable that in certain cases they use the same agents. It seems, according to declarations made by qualified representatives of the German people, that the Gestapo consider me as a public enemy. The collaboration of two secret police services in this attack is perfectly possible. In any case, the direction of it was undoubtedly in the hands of the G.P.U., since my activity has an incomparably greater interest for Stalin than for Hitler.

"The foreign organisation of the G.P.U. has its traditions and rules well established. Those of its agents (General

Krivitzky, Ignace Reiss and others) who have broken with it during the past few years have made a series of revelations of the greatest importance. And it is these revelations, as well as other sources of information which have reached me, that I use as a basis for defining the methods employed by the G.P.U.

"Above all, it is absolutely necessary to establish the fact that the activity of the G.P.U. is closely tied to that of the Comintern, its directing elements and its members occupying highly confidential positions. For its activities the G.P.U. needs legal or semi-legal protection, as well as a sympathetic background for the recruitment of its agents, and this background and this protection it finds principally in the Communist Parties.

"The general scheme of the foreign organisation of the G.P.U. is as follows: *In every country where the local Communist Party is affiliated to the Comintern, the Party's Central Committee contains a responsible leader of the G.P.U.* Generally the fact of his being a representative of the G.P.U. is known only to the secretary of the Party and to one or two members of the Central Committee. The others can only guess the exceptional position the person in question has. I do not possess any particular information on the working of the G.P.U. in Mexico. But there is every reason for thinking, in view of the general methods of organisation, that Mexico is no exception.

"In his position as a member of the Central Committee, the national representative of the G.P.U. has the means of approaching all the members of the Party, of studying their characters, of choosing them with certain definite tasks in view, and thus of winning them over little by little to the work of espionage and terrorism—by appealing to their sense of duty towards the Party or, quite simply, bribing them.

"The whole of this set-up was discovered in France and in Switzerland on the occasion of the assassination of Ignace Reiss and in the preparation of terroristic attempts against my son and other persons. As far as the U.S.A. is concerned, Walter Krivitsky showed that the sister of the General Secretary of the American Communist Party, Browder, had been placed, on the recommendation of the latter, at the disposition of the G.P.U. as secret agent. This example is not an exception, but the rule.

"Everything seems to show that the principal organisers of the attempt came from abroad. It is possible that they left Mexico after having prepared their plans and allotted the various roles. Such a method of procedure is usual in the G.P.U., which, as an organ of the Russian Government, is very careful not to leave any trace.

"The foreign emissaries who go to a particular country with a special mission always work in strict agreement with the national representative of the G.P.U., who is a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, for without that they could not get to know the conditions of the country in question or find the necessary implements for the accomplishment of their mission. The foreign emissary, in collaboration with the national representative and his confidential agents, works out the general plan of the undertaking, studies the list of possible collaborators, and, little by little, informs them of the plans. In this technical work, it is the national representative and his secret general staff who play the principal roles.

"I do not possess any information on the real part played by Sergeant Casas and the five police officers under his orders whose job it was to guard the outside of the house.¹

¹ They were arrested when it was thought that the attack was feigned. As soon as their innocence was established, they were set at liberty.

One cannot be certain that they were not involved in the preparation of the plot; the G.P.U. has means of persuasion, of pressure and of corruption that no other organisation in the world possesses. It might have convinced them that I am an enemy of the Mexican people, or have promised them, under certain conditions, a career, or simply offered an exceptionally high price for their services. The foreign agents could not have found the means of approaching the Mexican police; they must have had national agents for that. It is these agents of demoralisation and corruption who prepare the attack and who must be looked for in the heart of and round about the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

"The G.P.U. attaches the greatest importance to everything which concerns the political preparation of an attack, particularly if it is the assassination of persons well-known in the vast circles of world opinion. This part of the work falls on to the Communist Press, on Communist orators and on 'The Friends of the U.S.S.R.' That is why, to my mind, the enquiry should turn on the work of the newspapers *El Popular*,¹ *La Voz de Mexico*,² and of some of the correspondents of *Nacional*.³ I do not refer to the political criticism of my convictions, since criticism of this type, even the severest, is the elementary right of everyone. But *La Voz de Mexico* and *El Popular* have never made such a criticism. Their speciality, like that of certain orators, such as Sr. Lombardo Toledano, has consisted solely, during the

¹ Organ of the C.T.M. (Confederation of Mexican Workers) the leader of which is Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Moscow's principal instrument in Latin America.

² Official Organ of the Mexican C.P.

³ Official organ of the Mexican Government, infested by Communist editors and correspondents. *El Popular*, like *El Nacional*, are newspapers with a very small circulation. *La Voz de Mexico* is a weekly.

three and a half years of my sojourn in Mexico, in spreading all sorts of calumnies against me, each more scurrilous than the last. It is in this manner that they have accused me of maintaining relations with all the reactionary centres in Mexico and other countries. In one of his speeches, Sr. Toledano declared that I was preparing a general strike against the Government of General Cardenas. In *El Machete*¹ and in *La Voz de Mexico* I am accused, every Sunday, of preparing an uprising with General Cedillo² and with numerous other anti-revolutionaries, real or supposed. They state that I have secret relations with a certain Dr. Atl³ as well as with the German Fascists in Mexico, etc. . . .

"More recently *Futuro*⁴ and *El Popular*, like *La Voz de Mexico*, have systematically repeated that I am in secret contact with the reactionary deputy of the U.S.A., Dies, and that I sent him information directed against Mexican interests. All these accusations lack common sense, for they impute acts which are contrary not only to my ideas and the work of my whole life, but to my most immediate interests, for I should really have lost my reason if I were to commit such acts of disloyalty towards the Mexican Government, which has accorded me such generous hospitality.

"I would remind you that on various occasions, through the voice of the Press, I have proposed to my accusers the setting up of a special commission, the members of which

¹ A periodical with a revolutionary past, fallen into Communist hands, and which has since disappeared.

² This general rose against the Cardenas Government and died during the rebellion.

³ A strange and picturesque fellow, a painter and poet, turbulent and perhaps a little mad, of whom no one speaks any more.

⁴ Review of the C.T.M., but edited by the Communists, like *El Popular*.

should be chosen by the Government and the P.R.M.,¹ for the purpose of examining the accusations brought against me. Lombardo Toledano and the leaders of the Communist Party have carefully refused to accept this proposition.

"One cannot help asking the question: why do Sr. Lombardo Toledano and the Communist leaders feel themselves forced to cast slanders at me with the evident object of discrediting me in the eyes of the authorities and Mexican public opinion? These gentlemen can have no personal animosity against me, since I have never been in contact and, consequently, in conflict with them. If they act thus with such ardour and such impudence, it is solely because they have received the order. And who could have given them the order? Evidently, the master of the Kremlin, Joseph Stalin.

"I do not mean by that, that Lombardo Toledano and the leaders of the Mexican Communist Party have taken a direct part in the preparation of the attack against me. The G.P.U. imposes in this respect a strict division of labour. It assigns the task of systematically spreading slander to the best-known personalities. To the agents less known but more reliable, it confides the task of assassination.

"However, Sr. Toledano is not a young man without experience who does not know what he is doing. He knows perfectly well the methods of the G.P.U. and particularly the systematic persecution to which I, the members of my family and my friends have been and are exposed throughout the world. It is not a secret for him that the G.P.U. aspires to my physical annihilation. That is why I am within my rights when I say that, in spreading these odious slanders about me, he has participated in the moral preparation of the

¹ Party of the Mexican Revolution of an official character, called at present the Institutional Revolutionary Party.

attack. That is why it would be of immense interest for the investigation to question Toledano as a witness.

"There cannot be the least doubt that the leaders of the Communist Party know perfectly well who is the representative of the G.P.U. in Mexico. I may also add that David Alfaro Siqueiros, who participated in the Spanish Civil War as an active Stalinist, cannot help but know who are the principal members of the G.P.U., Spanish, Mexicans and others who, on different occasions, have arrived in Mexico, particularly via Paris.¹ The interrogation of the previous and present General Secretary of the Communist Party, as well as of Siqueiros, would help very much to shed light on everything concerning the attempt on my life, as well as to discover the accomplices."

¹ In suggesting the name of David Alfaro Siqueiros, known since his journey in Spain under the nickname of "Little Colonel," Trotsky showed great intuition. As will be seen later, it was he, in fact, who organised the attempt on Trotsky's life.

III

On the Track at Last

THE days which followed the release of Trotsky's two secretaries were for me a period of real anxiety, if not of anguish. Those who have not passed through such an experience cannot imagine what the period which elapses between the time when a sensational crime has been committed and the moment when the right track is found, means for a police investigator. In this particular case, political passion was added to the sensational character of the affair.

The Communists, directed according to Trotsky by the invisible wires of the G.P.U., were raising a hullabaloo trying to destroy the strong and legitimate suspicions which fell upon them, and to turn attention from the only track which might lead to the discovery of the culprits. And Trotsky himself, casting aside the discretion which he had observed until then, filled the Press with communiqués, striving to lead opinion and direct the efforts of the police. All that was normal. The traditional polemic between the Trotskyists and the Stalinists became accentuated now round the attack and its political and judiciary repercussions.

It is no less true to say that such campaigns helped to discredit the police force, the defence of which fell on me, and to throw doubt on its zeal and capacity. The journalists, Mexican as well as foreign, haunted me daily, thinking that I was hiding the truth from them regarding the progress of the enquiry. They had to find something to say to their readers thirsting for news. To that was added the interest stirred up, as much in Mexico as in other countries, by such

a sensational event—an interest proved by the ever-increasing attention that was given to it by certain diplomatic circles.

This affair seemed to be tied up, in fact, with the progress of the war. Was it possible that the agents of the Gestapo had participated in the plot? Or agents from both the G.P.U. and the Gestapo, in view of the existence of the pact between Hitler and Stalin? And if this were so, would it not show that the understanding between Berlin and Moscow went deeper than was thought? Finally, everyone was waiting for me to clear the matter up, and, for the moment at least, I was quite unable to do so. I do not exaggerate when I say that I hardly ate or slept during all that time.

But chance, which often acts providentially for the police, was not slow in favouring me. One day I happened to go into a bar at the corner of Luis Moya Street and the Arcos de Belen. It was about one o'clock in the afternoon. Five tramway employees were seated round a table, discussing the attack. One of them declared:

"What is certain is that the police mean to hush up the affair. Without doubt, they have their reasons for doing so, but this is how it is."

I lent an ear. They were drinking beer mixed with *tequila*¹ and seemed a little drunk. The one who had just spoken was getting on in years and rather corpulent, dressed in a greasy navy-blue suit. He wore at his side a tarpaulin bag, with a shoulder-strap, as do all tram conductors. He went on:

"The papers pretend that the police are following up their enquiries. What a joke! I was here the other day having a drink with my pals. Near us was sitting the police magistrate of Tacubaya. He'd been having a few, and was telling his

¹ A drink fermented by the aid of a liquid which the Indians get from the cactus.

friends that he had lent two police uniforms which had been used in the attack. And the police want to make us believe that they can't find any tracks! Let them go and tell that to Juan Diego."¹

I thought at first that the old fellow had recognised me and was speaking purely for my benefit; but, faithful to my decision to follow any clue, however absurd it might seem, I telephoned for my car and went back to my office. There I called Major Galindo and told him what I had just heard.

"Go at once to the Delegation of Tacubaya and ask the magistrates to come to see me," I told him.

"I have a friend who works in the Central Department and who at present occupies the post of magistrate," he told me after a moment's reflexion. "He is, in fact, a man who likes his drink. I'll run and fetch him."

He did so. His friend was not at the Delegation at the moment, but he managed to get in touch with him at his home. Some hours later the man arrived. I had him sent to my private room, next door to the official office, so that no one should disturb us. My intuition told me that this was the man of whom the old tram conductor had been speaking. I started thus:

"In the position of State servant, your duty is to help the Government. There is no need for me to tell you why I have had you brought here. You know why perfectly well, and you know the gravity of the act you have committed. I command you to tell me the whole truth."

For a moment he seemed utterly dismayed. His attitude showed that he felt himself to be in the wrong. To calm him and persuade him to confide in me, I added:

¹ The name of the Indian to whom, according to the legend, had appeared the virgin of Guadalupe, considered as the Madonna of Mexico.

"I know that you are the breadwinner for a large family, and that what you have done you did out of friendship. If you will tell me the name of the person who required your services, I will give you my word—the word of a soldier and a police officer—that you will hear no more about it. And you won't be betraying anybody, as you will be serving the cause of justice. The real traitor is the one who has compromised you."

I had no need to say any more.

"I got mixed up in this affair in spite of myself, Colonel," he began. "This is what happened. . . . About four o'clock in the afternoon of May 17th, I happened to be on duty at the 11th Police Delegation when a man I know called Mateo Martinez came to see me. . . ."

"Mateo Martinez? Give me his full name, please."

"Luis Mateo Martinez. I only learned later that he calls himself Luis."

"Good. Continue."

"He asked me to get three police uniforms for him, assuring me that they were wanted for the purpose of entering—I don't remember whether it was the headquarters or the house of an Almazanist general. His friends had learned that there were some arms hidden there, and, after making sure of it, were going to denounce the General to the Public Prosecutor. At the moment everything seemed to be above-board. We could not find the stock room at the Depot, and Mateo Martinez had to come twice. Finally, I arranged to see him at my home at ten o'clock the following morning. I thought about it all night and came to the conclusion that what they intended to do was illegal, and that it would be stupid on my part to procure them the uniforms in question. I decided to stay away from the house on the pretext of urgent business at the time fixed for their appointment. And I haven't seen them since."

"Do you mean to say by that that you didn't let them have the uniforms?"

"I do, Colonel. And I realise now that I acted rightly. Doubtless they managed to get them elsewhere."

I did not attempt to disguise the immense satisfaction that I felt on hearing the declarations of this man, to whom I immediately expressed my gratitude. At least I was on the right track! The name of Luis Mateo Martinez might prove to be the key to the whole affair.

"Do you know Mateo's address?"

"Perfectly."

He told me what it was. I immediately gave orders for the man in question to be arrested. It was the excellent Jose Lopez Mejia, one of those who most distinguished himself during the enquiry, who took the job in hand. A few hours later Mateo Martinez was before me. He was about twenty-six years old, a teacher by profession, and a member of the Mexican Communist Party. He tried to appear calm, but without success. He seemed to be afraid. And, in fact, he had reason to be. I asked him point-blank:

"For whom did you intend the uniforms that you were trying to get? There's no use in lying or hiding anything."

I thought that as he was a disciplined Communist he would put up a strong resistance. He did nothing of the sort. Perhaps he thought I knew more than I actually did. The fact is that he immediately admitted having tried to procure the uniforms in question for David Serrano Andonegui, Communist ex-major during the Spanish Civil War.

"For what reason?" I asked him.

Rather worried, he replied:

"I don't know exactly. . . . Serrano Andonegui told me: 'There's an Almazanist centre where they've got a stock of arms hidden, and we want to make a search. You must get hold of these uniforms.' And I set about it."

I realised that he knew a lot more about it than he had told me, and I even suspected that he had taken part in the attack. But I decided to leave that until later. What interested me then was to find this man who seemed to be the key to the whole affair: David Serrano Andonegui. I was convinced that he would prove to be a precious link in the chain which would lead me to the capture of the guilty ones.

Serrano Andonegui lived at No. 85 Violeta Street. I went there immediately with fifteen officers. It was about nine o'clock at night; the weather was damp and unpleasant. We found the door locked. In spite of our insistence, the occupants of the house refused to open it. From the replies I received from the other side of the door, I gathered that there were several people there, of both sexes and of Spanish nationality.

There was a building in course of construction near to the house. I gave the order to four of my officers to climb up the scaffolding. Others climbed on to the roof of the house next door. They were not long in opening the door of No. 85 for us, in spite of furious protests from the occupants.

It was a boarding house for Spanish refugees, among whom were five or six young people who obviously had nothing to do with the affair. It was run by a woman of about thirty, pretty and aggressive, who said she was the wife of Andonegui. She tried to use all sorts of subterfuge to prevent the search. With typically Spanish charm, she cried to one of the boarders:

"Eh, get your mantilla out to send to Cardenas tomorrow. He will know from whom the present comes."

This brave and courageous Spanish woman thus tried to intimidate us by making us think that she was on terms of friendship with the President of the Republic. But her efforts

were in vain. We were not long in capturing David Serrano Andonegui. We also found numerous documents.

I took the prisoner to my office. He was a man of thirty-six, dark, thinnish, with an oval-shaped, rather sharp face. An active Communist, he had taken part in the Spanish Civil War, where he had been a major, a fact which showed that they had great confidence in him. He was now a member of the Central Committee of the Mexican Communist Party.

The importance all these facts held for the investigation will be understood. They were leading me to Stalinist Communism, surely to the G.P.U. itself. I soon made a second discovery: David Serrano Andonegui had been married twice, once in Mexico and once in Spain. This case of bigamy would place an important weapon against him in my hands should it prove necessary.

A letter was found among the documents taken from Serrano Andonegui's house. The envelope, which bore the printed heading of the "Hotel Majestic," was addressed to "Captain Nestor, 54 Avenue Guatemala." The find was important. We soon learned that Nestor Sanchez Hernandez, ex-captain of the International Brigade, had lived at this address. From that moment it became clear that old combatants of the Spanish Civil War had chiefly been used for the attempt on Trotsky's life; and behind them was surely the G.P.U.

Nestor Sanchez Hernandez had disappeared from the Avenue Guatemala. Among the documents found at Serrano Andonegui's we found another address: 101 Correidora Street. I gave orders for two of my officers, Pedro C. Balderas and Liborio R. Santos, to go to this address. It was a tenement house, the doorkeeper of which was Carlos Sanchez, uncle of Nestor. He was a man of about fifty. He seemed rather upset. I said to him:

"A friend of your nephew Nestor is looking for him. He's an old combatant in the Spanish Civil War, like himself. He wants to give him a letter. Can you tell us where he is?"

He did not know, or did not want to say where his nephew lived. I suspected that he might well be staying with him. I asked him:

"Then how does it happen that you have in your house articles which belong to him?"

Rather worried, he said:

"Objects which belong to him? No, señor. The only thing he asked me to keep for him is a travelling case, not a very big one."

I cried:

"But that is exactly the case I want to know about! Tell me all you can about it."

He then told me that on about May 28th or 29th—that is to say, a few days after the attack—about half-past nine in the morning Nestor came to his house carrying a case, on the cover of which was a blue label with a white cross on it. He asked permission to leave it with him. The uncle put it in his own room, hiding it behind a basket and locking the door. Nestor asked him to look after it carefully and left.

Two or three days later he returned to see if there were any letters for him. On receiving a negative reply from his uncle, Nestor, with his back turned, opened the mysterious case and took something out which he quickly hid under his raincoat. He then closed it again and left. When he returned a few days later, his uncle gave him a letter which he had received for him from his father. He read it and said:

"Take good care of this case, Uncle. If anyone comes to ask for me, say that I don't live here and that I never come. Understand?"

Since this visit he had not returned.

"And you do not know where he is living?"

"No, señor, I assure you I don't."

"But this case," I said. "It is exactly the case your nephew's friends are looking for. If you do not hand it over to us, you will be seriously compromised, you and your nephew."

He replied that he would give it to us. I sent the officers Balderas and Santos to fetch the case, the contents of which intrigued me.

I soon had it in my office. The moment it was opened the mystery was cleared. It contained a police uniform with the badges of the 7th Company, two bandoliers and a Star automatic pistol with two loaders.

There was no doubt about it: this was one of the uniforms used during the attack. The pistol was one of those taken from the police officers guarding Trotsky's house. Two very important pieces of evidence.

But we had to put our hands on Nestor Sanchez, key to the affair. That night, and with all possible discretion, I posted two officers opposite the house of Nestor's uncle. They were relieved at set hours. I was sure that, sooner or later, Nestor would come to see if there were any letters for him or to fetch his compromising deposit. And he did in fact fall into our hands two days later, and was brought to the *Pocito*.

I went there immediately, not wishing to delay the interrogation a single minute. To my great surprise, Nestor greeted me by saying:

"I know you, Colonel. I've known you for a long time."

"You know me? How?"

"In my native town, Oaxaca. I served there under your orders when you were the military commander of the district."

We were thus old acquaintances. Clearly I had to take full

advantage of this circumstance. Nestor was a youth of twenty-three, very dark, with an open face, a broad forehead and almond-shaped black eyes. He was a law student.

He did not tell me point blank all he knew. Nevertheless, as will be seen, his statements formed an almost complete explanation of the affair.

He denied being a member of the Communist Party or of ever having had the least connection with that organisation.

"Then why have you participated in the attack on Trotsky?" I asked him.

"Out of friendship for David Alfaro Siqueiros, Colonel."

"David Alfaro Siqueiros? Did he also participate in the affair?"

"He was the organiser and chief director of it."

Nestor had become acquainted with Siqueiros in Paris at the time of the Spanish Civil War. One day, towards the end of April in the current year, Siqueiros invited him to participate in "an affair of exceptional importance" without telling him of what it consisted.

"You had no suspicion what it was about? How was that possible?"

"Look, Colonel. I let my revolutionary ideas and my adventurous spirit run away with me. When David told me that it was a matter of the greatest importance, I immediately accepted without asking any questions. Afterwards I had several conversations with him, and, of course, soon found out that it was an affair in which Trotsky's life was at stake. I had always been told that he was a dangerous counter-revolutionary, an enemy of the Russian Revolution and of the Mexican Revolution.

"Siqueiros assured me that he had worked out a plan, and that when the moment arrived he would have sufficient means at his disposal to ensure its success. I thought the

preparations they were making were too vast, and told David so. They were, in fact, making bombs and buying machine-guns and revolvers in great quantities. Money circulated freely. Siqueiros assured me: 'We shall need all that to make sure that the affair finishes up as it has got to finish up. We don't want it to fail.' "

Whilst he was talking I could not help thinking that Trotsky was right when he said that the G.P.U. managed things well, splitting up the work according to the people available to do it: whilst some of them conducted a violent campaign in the Communist Press, trying to give the impression that he was a counter-revolutionary and a sworn enemy of Russia and Mexico, the others, well-known for their adventurous spirit, of which they had given proof during the Spanish Civil War, prepared the material details of the attack.

The investigation was beginning to confirm the theory advanced by Trotsky. In his statement he had suggested the name of Alfaro Siqueiros, and it was now becoming clear that this was the man who was the organiser and principal director of the attack. But who had assumed its intellectual direction?

"Do you know of any foreigners who took part, or were at least involved, in the instigation of the attack?"

"No; but I presume that the real organisers and executors of the plot were foreigners who had come to Mexico solely for that purpose. What makes me think so is that Siqueiros was always having mysterious secret meetings about the most important of the preparations. In reality, they made use of him, because he was a Mexican, to recruit the necessary people, and for the material preparations of the attack."

He also revealed that they had used another painter friend of his, Antonio Pujol, as well as Siqueiros. Pujol had tried to force Nestor to procure the uniforms. But he had

refused, and Siqueiros had told him that he would play only a secondary role.

He then recounted in detail the manner in which the attempt had been carried out.

"On May 23rd, Siqueiros arranged to meet me at the corner of Chili Street and Cuba Street. It was ten o'clock at night. We went to a house in Cuba Street, the number of which I've forgotten. Towards midnight, several people arrived who were unknown to me; they carried suitcases from which they began to take out uniforms and arms. There were a machine-gun, four revolvers and two 'Thermos' bombs, as well as ropes and rubber-gloves.

"On Siqueiros's orders, we tried on the uniforms. The one intended for me fitted me very well. Pujol put on an Army lieutenant's uniform, the others policemen's uniforms. We laughed and joked as though it were a feast-day. Siqueiros went out without telling us what the plans were. I don't know whether Pujol knew what they were, but I didn't.

"Towards two o'clock Siqueiros came back wearing a major's military uniform; he did not tell us where he had put it on and we did not ask him. He wore a rain-coat, glasses and a false moustache. We greeted him with great bursts of laughter. Turning round a little he asked us: 'How does it suit me?' We replied in chorus: 'Very well.' Then we went out into the street, in uniform and well-armed.

"I carried a Star pistol—.45-calibre—with two automatic loaders. Pujol carried the machine-gun. The others had two revolvers among them. At the door a grey car was waiting for us. We got in and made for Coyoacan. During the journey Siqueiros gave us our instructions. Our group must overcome the guard post, but without firing a single shot. The alarm must not be raised before getting inside the house. He gave each of us an envelope containing 250 pesos.

"At the top of the Viveros of Coyoacan two men were waiting for us. I recognised one of them: it was Juan Zuniga Camacho. Siqueiros talked for a moment with him. Then we parked in a street parallel with Vienna Street and got out of the car.

"Siqueiros looked at his watch and gave us the order to advance towards the guard post. At the same time, other individuals also dressed as policemen were advancing, belonging no doubt to other groups. It was ours, led by Siqueiros, who surprised the police guarding Trotsky's house. They offered us no resistance, doubtless because they had seen us arrive in uniform. Someone, I believe it was Siqueiros himself, cried: 'Long live Almazan!'

"Two other policemen arrived, brought in by the members of another group. They were disarmed and I and one of my friends whom we called 'the Provincial' kept guard over them. We had been told to see that they did not move. At this moment other individuals appeared, mostly dressed as civilians. By their accents, I recognised that some of them were foreigners. They went towards Trotsky's house, the main gate of which opened immediately."

"Who opened it?"

"I know now: it was Sheldon. During the journey from Chili Street Siqueiros had assured us that all would go well because one of Trotsky's guards had been bought. I learned later that it was Sheldon. I had expressed my doubts to Siqueiros: 'And if this fellow betrays us and we get machine-gunned?' I had asked him. And Siqueiros had replied, smiling: 'There isn't any fear of that!'"

And he went on with his account.

"Immediately the machine-guns went into action. From the guard post where I was waiting I heard brisk firing. It lasted only a few minutes. Soon two cars were brought out from Trotsky's place. A foreigner got out of one of them

and ordered us, in a voice with a French accent, to get in it. We obeyed. Sheldon, greatly agitated, was already in the car.

"The other car was stuck in the mud at some distance from Trotsky's home. One of those who were in it, a man with a Cuban accent, got into our car. We rushed headlong along streets which I do not know as far as the Calzada of Coyoacan, and from there in the direction of the centre of the town. The foreigner with the French accent constantly urged the driver on. I'm not sure, but I think it was Sheldon who was driving. What is certain is that the foreigner spoke to him in Spanish and that the other asked him to speak in English.

"I had the feeling I was taking part in a film adventure. The foreigner with the French accent suddenly ordered us to take off our uniforms. I categorically refused, so as not to be left wearing only my under-pants. The car rushed along the Avenue of the Insurgents. At the top of a square the name of which I don't know, the 'Frenchman' ordered us to get out one by one. He remained with Sheldon and the others. I imagine that this was the car which was later found on the Colonia Roma.

"I took a taxi and went home. It must have been a little later than half-past four."

"Where did the revolver come from that was found in your case?"

"It belonged to one of the policemen on guard at Trotsky's house. Someone told me to bring it. The Star that I had on me remained in the car driven by Sheldon."

"How many assailants were there in all?"

"About twenty. The attack was led by Alfaro Siqueiros and the foreigner I told you about. It seemed to me that he was a French Jew."

I was interested in obtaining as much precise information

as possible regarding the role that Robert Sheldon Harte had played. Nestor declared on this subject:

"I am convinced that the individual 'bought' by Siqueiros was Sheldon. The attack took place on exactly the day and at the time when Sheldon was on guard. It was he who opened the door. He had no doubt been bribed by the French Jew. It was evident that they already knew each other before the attack. They were together in the car taken from Trotsky's house, and which, I remember now, was driven by Sheldon himself. He drove it in any case from leaving Trotsky's to the moment when I got out."

"Can you describe him to me?" I asked.

"I didn't know him before, of course, but I remember him perfectly from that evening. He was a young man, obviously an American, rather tall: that night he was wearing a pair of light trousers and a jacket. In any case it seemed to me that a certain familiarity existed between him and the French Jew."

"And you don't know what the latter's name is?"

"I heard him called 'Felipe' once or twice. That's all I know about him."

As can be seen, the statements of Nestor Sanchez Hernandez threw an extraordinary light on the affair. I knew, thanks to them, the two chief organisers of the attack: the painters, David Alfaro Siqueiros and Antonio Pujol. Where were they hiding? Certainly, it was not going to be an easy task to lay hands on them.

Could it still be doubted, in spite of the declaration of Trotsky and his secretaries, that Robert Sheldon Harte was guilty? And another question: had he succeeded in leaving Mexico or was he being kept hidden somewhere in the country? His capture took on a decisive importance.

According to Nestor Sanchez, Sheldon and the man called Felipe knew each other, so that if I could lay hands on

Sheldon perhaps it would not be difficult to get to know who the French Jew was. He was undoubtedly an agent of the G.P.U. and the real instigator of the attack.

I had specially urgent telegrams demanding the arrest of Sheldon sent to the ports of Vera Cruz, Tampico, Puerto Mexico, Progreso, Frontera, Manzanillo, Mazatlan and Guaymas, as well as to the frontier posts of Ciudad Juarez, Piedras Negras, Laredo, Matamoros and Nogales. I instructed the police at these places to prevent Sheldon at all costs from leaving the country. At the same time I established a strict control over various telephone lines, beginning with that of Trotsky himself.

In the room which Sheldon occupied in Trotsky's house, there had been found a key which fitted the lock of Room 37 at the Hotel Europa, a small travelling trunk with a Moscow stamp on it, and a bottle of beer. From enquiries made at the said hotel, it appeared that Sheldon had passed the night of May 21st there with a prostitute, who was soon identified. She declared that Sheldon had been a little drunk that night, and that he had a large sum of money on him. He had not taken her into his confidence. We also knew through one of the other secretaries that Sheldon possessed a large number of American Express travellers cheques of 10 and 20 dollars each, which he changed fairly frequently at the bank. From where did he get this money? From his family? Or was it his payment for the betrayal?

We learned as a result of our investigations that Sheldon had arrived in Mexico on April 7th last, by air, strongly recommended by friends of Trotsky in New York, and had been accepted by the latter as a guard. Consequently, he had occupied this post barely seven weeks. From time to time Trotsky changed his secretaries, all militants of the Fourth International, so that they should be politically formed at his side while securing his personal safety. This method

was perhaps useful, but did not lack danger, for it might allow the G.P.U., expert in the art of corruption and disposing of powerful material means and methods of moral constraint, to introduce its own agents into Trotsky's fortress. Perhaps that was what had happened with Sheldon.

Through Mr. George Snow, American Consul in Mexico, we learned that Mr. Jesse Sheldon Harte, father of the missing man, had arrived in the Mexican capital by Pan-American Airways. On his request, for he was afraid for his life, I put a police officer at his disposal, who was ordered to accompany him day and night, thus permitting me easily to control all his acts and movements. He had numerous telephonic communications, one of them with Mr. Hoover, Chief of the Federal Research Bureau of the U.S.A., with whom he seemed to be friendly. Also at his request, he had a long conversation with Trotsky. On leaving, he declared that he had gained no new information regarding the fate of his son. Trotsky stated on his side that they had agreed that the attack had been prepared and directed by foreign agents of the G.P.U. The police had already clearly established that.

According to Mr. Hoover, the instigator of the attack had been a man called Mink, who had arrived in Mexico from Philadelphia a few days previously. This Mink was one of the chief agents of the G.P.U., on whose behalf he had already accomplished important missions in Spain, Japan, U.S.A. and various other countries.

The evidence of Mr. Jesse Sheldon Harte was not without interest for the light it threw on the real role played by his son. Alfonso Diez Barriga, Assistant Chief of the Federal Judiciary, asked him several questions with the help of an interpreter from the American Embassy. Sheldon had never told his family that he was in Trotsky's service, but had said that he had come to Mexico to work for a certain Mr.

Williams, from whom he had separated because the latter had tried to get money out of him. As a result, he had been obliged to live in a boarding-house, where he paid for his keep by giving English lessons to the proprietor's daughter. He had never given an address, but had asked them to write to him "care of Wells Fargo."

And he made this important statement, which I quote textually from the report signed by the Assistant Chief of Judiciary Police who interrogated him: ". . . and still less had his son told him that he was working for Trotsky, for he supposed that he had no sympathy for him and even that he was a supporter of Stalin, from the fact that he had a portrait of this person in his room in New York, a portrait which was found by his brothers." Thus the statement made by the father of Sheldon entirely confirmed my suspicions regarding the real role of his son.

Nestor Sanchez Hernandez had promised to send for me if he remembered any further detail in the affair. And in fact I received word from him one day saying that he wished to speak to me. I immediately went to the *Pocito*.

"I have sent for you, Colonel," he began, "because I have remembered some things which might be very useful in clearing up the affair. About three weeks before the attack, I accompanied Juan Zuniga Camacho, known among us by the name of 'Pedro,' to Vienna Street to see if they could find us anything there for a young miner, to do, tall and broad, who did not know the town and could not even write. Siqueiros had told me that in this house were other people of the same sort, whom he had had brought here in readiness for the attack. The miner in question was a native of Hostotipaquillo, in the state of Jalisco. In the course of a conversation, he spoke of a place called Cinco Minas."

"I went to his house five or six times. On one of these occasions I recognised a man called Mariano Vasquez,

Mateo, a friend of mine whom you have arrested, introduced me to him. It appeared that one of Vasquez's sisters had been a friend of mine. She is now married to an Italian, an ex-combatant of the International Brigade, and they live, I believe, at 38 Republica de Chile. I deduced from all this that Vasquez also worked for Siqueiros. He lived, on Siqueiros' orders, at 108 London Street. I went there three times. During one of these visits I met the French Jew, the man called Felipe, who told me: 'I'm going to give you a telephone number, in case you need to get in touch with me urgently. But I absolutely forbid you to write it down. You must memorise it.' This I did."

"Do you still remember it?"

"Perfectly."

"Then give it to me."

He gave it to me. Would it lead me to the hiding place of the G.P.U. agent who had directed the attack against Trotsky? Without losing a moment, I went to the Central Telephone Exchange. The staff were just leaving. I kept back one of the young ladies, begging her to look in the the records for the address of the person to whom belonged the number indicated by Hernandez. When she found it, I was struck dumb with surprise. I realised suddenly that I had had the "French Jew" within arm's reach, and that I had not arrested him. I could have kicked myself.

The very evening when, on President Cardenas' orders, I had taken Trotsky's secretaries back to him, I had spoken with a Russian woman who lived not far away. She told me that, in a house in the Acacias where she lived, she had noticed an unusual amount of coming and going every night for about a month. I decided to go and inspect the place for myself. Previously, I had questioned Trotsky on the subject of his compatriot.

"Oh yes, I know her. She's hysterical and a bit mad,"

In spite of this unfavourable opinion, determined as I was to follow any possible clue, I had made Galindo give orders to have the place watched by means of a dozen officers hidden behind the curtain of trees which surrounded the block of buildings known as the Acacias. These measures taken, I had gone with my assistant, Quezada, and a group of agents to the house of Diego Rivera, situated at San Angel. I had reasons for thinking that this celebrated artist was also mixed up in the attack of May 24th.

Rivera's vast work-gallery was decorated by different pictures of his own creation. On an easel an unfinished canvas showed his wife, Frida Kahlo, in the costume of "*china poblana*"¹ which she habitually wore. I had never been in the painter's house before, and I was extremely surprised to see the strange figures which adorned it. Pot-bellied caricatures of gigantic size made of sedge and dressed in clothes of India paper of the most vivid and varied colours, with cardboard masks and grotesque grins; enormous figures, such as those called "Judas," which are burned in Mexico on the Saturday of Gloria each year, accompanied by cries of joy and the explosion of fireworks. The most surprising thing was to see these "Judases" scattered in all the corners, on and underneath the beds, hanging from the roof . . . one might have called it a nightmare house. The search gave no result, for we found not the slightest indication of any participation whatsoever in the attack. Equally fruitless was the visit we paid to the house of Frida Kahlo, at Coyoacan, a house decorated in the same extravagant fashion as that of her husband.

I returned to the Acacias. Nothing of interest had happened. The officers were still at their posts. I knew that opposite the suspected house dwelt a cripple, an ex-athlete who spent his time looking at what was happening in

¹ Traditional costume of the women of the Puebla.

his neighbour's houses, with the aid of a pair of field-glasses. Accompanied by Galindo, I went to the cripple's house.

Just as we were pressing the door-bell, we saw a luxurious, dark-coloured car pull up in front of the house opposite. A man of medium height got out. He closed the windows of his car and locked the doors: then he leisurely went towards the gate, which he opened, crossed the little garden and entered the house. I told Galindo to take the car number by the aid of a flash-lamp: it was an American car. I posted two of my men there and ordered Major Galindo to remain.

I returned and pressed the door-bell of the cripple's house. It was about midnight. A little old woman, well wrapped up, came to open the door. I explained the object of my visit.

"My son has gone upstairs to bed," she told me, "but go up, sir."

I did so, followed by my assistant and another officer. We were shown into a small room. In a few minutes appeared a corpulent man of about forty-five years old, with grey hair. He was dressed in shirt and pants, and we could see the stump of his amputated leg.

"I should like you to tell me what you know about the people opposite," I said to him.

"I've watched them very carefully," he said. "They are people who lead a nocturnal life. There are Mexicans and foreigners among them, particularly Cubans. But I don't think they've had anything to do with the Trotsky affair. They must be tourists or people who like to lead a gay life. Nothing very wicked."

I obtained the address of the owner of the house and went to see him. He was a personal friend of General Nunez, who had awarded him the honorary commission of Major.

He told me that the house had been let, a little more than a month ago, on payment of a deposit, and that the rent had been met regularly. He, too, did not believe that the tenants had had anything to do with the attack. They told him that they were in business.

When I questioned Galindo about the man in the car, he told me: "He left immediately afterwards in his car. You saw yourself that there was nothing suspicious about him. . . ." And no other commentary was made on this aspect of the case.

But it now appeared that the address corresponding to the telephone number communicated by Hernandez¹ was that of the house in the Acacias. The famous "French Jew," known under the name of Felipe—it seems, in fact, that all the important agents of the G.P.U. use the simplest names (Pedro, Leopoldo, Felipe) and that their own collaborators do not know their real identity—was without doubt the man with the American car.

I went immediately to the house in question. It was empty, and we had to force open the door. I found, among other things, underwear bought on the Boulevard Saint Michel in Paris. Without doubt, he had come from Moscow via Paris, under orders to prepare the assassination of Trotsky. Was he a French Jew? It seems that among the principal agents of the G.P.U., Jews are fairly numerous—Russians, Poles, Lithuanians, Bulgarians and Hungarians—and there could not be many of them, particularly among

¹ This "Captain" Hernandez, after having taken part in the attack against Trotsky and betrayed his companions in crime and almost handed over the G.P.U. agent who organised the attack, was later decorated by the Polish Ambassador in Mexico at the end of September, 1946, for his "heroic conduct during the Spanish Civil War"—in reality, for his collaboration with the G.P.U. Was the latter ignorant of the revelations of the "heroic captain" when it awarded this decoration?

those charged with missions abroad, who do not speak French.

Was this George Mink, as the Chief of the U.S.A. Federal Police affirmed? Or Haikis, formerly U.S.S.R. Ambassador to Mexico, and afterwards in Spain during the second phase of the Civil War? There are many who lean towards this second hypothesis. We know nothing for certain, except that he was the organiser of the attack on May 24th and, without doubt, three months later of the assassination of Trotsky. There is every reason to believe that he left his house in the Acacias when he saw the police closing in on him. Doubtless he went to the U.S.A., becoming a member of the General Staff of the G.P.U. for the whole American continent.

I shall never forgive myself for having let him slip through my fingers. I must say, in self-justification, that the annoyance shown by President Cardenas over the arrest of Trotsky's secretaries had somewhat demoralised me. And Trotsky himself, usually so perspicacious, had not paid the slightest attention to the suggestions of his compatriot.

IV

A New Link in the Chain

FROM the beginning of the enquiry, I had made a visit each morning to the *Pocito*, so as not to lose contact with the suspects. These visits are in general very welcome to prisoners, particularly in the morning, after a night of silence, of solitude and reflexion. They break the monotony of their existence, put them in contact with outside life and allow them to obtain information, if only in scraps, on the subject which obsesses them: the progress of the enquiry into their case. That is why they always receive us with attentive curiosity. And nearly always they buy these scraps of information with some new revelation or complementary declaration. Their conscience has been working all night and needs to find some relief. And a certain familiarity begins to be established, particularly if one treats them sympathetically. This incites them to talk, to justify themselves—in a word, creates in them a desire to confess. I have found this frequently happen with excellent results.

One morning I unexpectedly entered the cell of Luis Mateo Martinez, the one who, it will be remembered, had asked the magistrate of Tacuaya for the police uniforms, and through whom I had been led to the militant Communist, David Serrano Andonegui. Since his arrest, the investigation had made such rapid progress that I had had no time to bother with him. I was sure that he knew much more than he had said. But he remained obstinately silent, doubtless so as to avoid compromising his friends. I knew that he

passionately loved his wife. I said to him in a stern voice:

"Listen, Mateo. If you insist in not telling me everything you know about the attack in which you took part, I'm afraid I shall have to arrest your wife."

He reacted immediately, touched to the quick:

"My wife? But she knows nothing."

"I don't agree. She must know quite a lot, and I am sure that she will tell me what you insist on hiding."

"I beg you, Colonel, do nothing to my wife. She is completely innocent. And I can say no more than I have already said."

"I will give you two hours in which to think it over. If by then you have not told me everything, you can only blame yourself for what happens to your wife."

And, simulating anger, I went out of the cell, leaving the police officer Lopez Mejia with him, so that he could try, with the tact and intelligence which were his special qualifications, to make him abandon his present attitude. I had not, of course, the least intention of doing anything at all to his wife, but he believed I had, without doubt. After I had questioned some of the other prisoners, and was on the point of returning to my office, Lopez Mejia came running towards me, just as I was getting into my car.

"Chief, chief, Mateo is losing all his blood! He has cut his veins and is dying!"

I ran towards the prisoner's cell. At the door were two officers. I opened it: a startling sight met my eyes. Mateo was lying on his folding-bed like a stuck pig in a pool of blood. What had happened to him? He lay with his mouth open, his legs drawn up, his head thrown back and a deathly look on his face. From his arms, one of which hung outside the bed, flowed a stream of blood. He had cut the veins of his wrists. On the chair, at the head of the bed, was a rusty Gillette razor-blade. Had he brought it in with him, or had

he found it in the cell? I thought he was dead, or on the point of dying. I put my ear to his chest at the same time as I placed my hand on his heart. He was still breathing. I shook him a little, passing my arm under his neck and slightly raising him, whilst saying to him:

"What has happened, Mateo? What have you done? What does it all mean?"

With a feeble voice he replied:

"Let me die. I've no use for life. Release my wife."

"Calm yourself. Your wife has not been arrested, and I have no intention of arresting her."

I took a handkerchief and made a tourniquet on the arm from which the greater amount of blood seemed to be flowing. With a handkerchief belonging to one of the other officers, I did the same to the other arm. Then I went to telephone to the Green Cross, and asked one of the doctors on duty to come immediately. After a rapid examination of the wounded man, he declared that a blood transfusion must be carried out at once. As we could not find an official donor, we engaged a person from a private establishment. We gave the wounded man a pint of blood and an injection of calcium. We then followed all the directions of the doctor. Eight days later, Mateo Martinez had recovered.

This unpleasant incident did not leak outside. But some of the prisoners arrested for the Trotsky affair mentioned it in a letter addressed to President Cardenas, in which they complained of being tortured. The President ordered General Nunez to send me with the prisoners to the National Palace. We went at once. General Cardenas had them shown into his office, whilst I remained outside, to avoid any suspicion whatsoever of coercion. They frankly declared to the President that they had undergone no violence and that their food had been sufficient. Naturally, as always happens in such cases, they used the occasion to protest their

innocence. All this occurred a few days after the attempted suicide of Mateo Martinez.

This incident disposed of, it was now a question of finding the place where the principal perpetrators of the attack were hidden. For the moment I had three important names: David Alfaro Siqueiros, Antonio Pujol and Juan Zuniga Camacho, known under the name of Pedro N. Where were they hiding?

As soon as his name had begun to appear in the Press, Alfaro Siqueiros had written to General Nunez to protest against the fact that he had not been called to act as witness in the affair, and offering to do so. He finished his letter thus: "In case of an affirmative reply, please write to me at my usual address: Tampico 21, Department 15. This legal procedure, to which I believe I have a perfect right, will avoid my being once more a victim of the insults or arbitrariness of subordinate officials." His obvious aim was to turn suspicion from himself. However, he took good care not to present himself to the police. Far from that, he had disappeared, along with his accomplices.

I had sent to the civil and military authorities a circular containing a description of the three missing men, as well as of Jesus Alfaro Siqueiros, brother of David, whom also I suspected of being involved in the affair. I reproduce here the description as it was given in the circular of the three people who played an important role in the case:

"David Alfaro Siqueiros: curly black hair, thick eyebrows, nose long and semi-aquiline, regular mouth, fair colouring, about forty-six years old, healthy complexion, wears a wide-brimmed hat and a blue or dark-brown suit of sponge cloth.

"Antonio Pujol: close-cropped bristly hair, brown eyes, flattened nose, large mouth, thick lips, native Mongolian type, about twenty-eight years old, untidy, generally wears dark-brown clothing and is slightly above medium height.

"Juan Zuniga Camacho, or Pedro N.: close-cropped bristly hair, puffy dark nut-brown eyes, squashed-in nose, regular mouth, lips rather thick, round face, angular jaws, dark colouring, about twenty-eight years old, no visible distinguishing marks. Generally wears a dark-brown jacket and black trousers."

I begged the said authorities to use all the means at their disposal for seeking out and capturing the three men.

One evening, using the information with which Hernandez had supplied me, I went with several officers, including among others Melchior Cardenas, Funes and Medina, to the Republic of Chile Street, to look for Antonio Pujol and Mariano Herrera Vasquez. It was a fairly large tenement house of two stories, containing a great number of flats. I left a group of officers on the ground floor, where the parents and grandparents of Vasquez lived. I sent others to the canteen which Pujol's father kept, with orders to bring him to me. For my own part, with my assistant Quezada and two officers, I occupied the staircases leading to the first-floor.

I entered one of the doors giving on to the south. It opened on to two sordid, dark rooms. In the second, furnished with two beds, two old wooden cupboards, a sewing-machine and a wooden travelling-trunk, were Pujol's mother, a native woman, very fat, a young girl of about twenty, and two little boys, Pujol's brothers.

"Where is your son Antonio?" I asked.

"We haven't seen him for several days, señor," the mother replied.

On top of one of the cupboards was a travelling-case. I opened it. It contained some very smart women's clothes: a silk dress, hats, toilet articles. How did they happen to be in such a sordid room? Pujol's mother hastened to explain to me that they belonged to an American woman, a friend of her son's.

"And where is this woman?"

"We don't know, señor."

I thought that Pujol and his girl-friend might very well be in America. This woman must be implicated one way or another in the attempt against Trotsky. As far as we could judge, they had fled without bothering to fetch the case.

In a trunk I found two linen bags full of one-peso pieces. At this moment Pujol's father arrived.

"You must know where your son Antonio is. Tell me, Señor Pujol. It will be better for everybody."

"But I can't tell you, señor," he replied. "He told me that he was leaving to carry out an order."

"And you don't know where? It seems very strange to me!"

I took away some documents of interest, a photograph of Pujol, among other things. There was not much we could do there. All told, the expedition had proved a failure. I was descending the stairs, very dissatisfied, when the officers stationed on the ground floor brought to me a young man, dark, wearing miner's boots, a shirt and riding-breeches.

"Who are you?" I asked him. "What is your name?"

Hesitating, he gave me a name of sorts. I realised at once that it was not his proper one. I had him taken to the *Pocito*, and was not long in starting to question him. I had to break down his resistance. At last he finished by telling me his real identity.

He was Mariano Herrera Vasquez. It was an important capture. In speaking to me about him, Hernandez had told me that one of the miners brought from Nayarit by Alfaro Siqueiros had accused Vasquez of having stolen a certain sum of money. In case of need, I could use this against him. I had thus in my hands another important link in the chain.

Vasquez was born in Mexico and was then twenty-six

years old. He was an electrician by profession. He had been a member of the Communist Party from 1934 to 1938, he told me. He was a bachelor, although he had lived for several years with Ana Lopez. . . .

Ana Lopez? A shopkeeper not far from Trotsky's house had heard two women, one called Julia and the other called Ana, who had lived for some time opposite her shop, talking very suspiciously. They had tried to get friendly with the police on guard outside Trotsky's house. One of them, Julia, had even had intimate relations with police officer Rudolfo Fregoso. The night of the attack they had hastily abandoned the house, half-dressed, Ana taking away the blanket which the policeman had lent her, and which he went to claim the next day. But it had disappeared. The women in question were Ana Lopez Chavez, Vasquez's paramour, and Julia Barradas Hernandez, first wife of the bigamist, David Serrano Andonegui.

Vasquez made a fairly complete statement. He declared that Ana and Julia were working for David Alfaro Siqueiros in the preparation of a certain undertaking. . . . Finding himself without work, he had asked his girl-friend to see if the painter could find anything for him to do. About May 5th, Ana had introduced him to a foreigner, whom he imagined to be a Frenchman, and the latter told him that he would employ him for a wage of 5 pesos a day. His work would be at Coyoacan, at the residence of General Almazan, and at a brother of General Cedillo's, and at . . . Leon Trotsky's. Vasquez accepted. The foreigner told him to come each morning at ten o'clock to the corner of Tampico Street and the Avenue of Chapultepec.

The fourth day he was met by David Alfaro Siqueiros, who promised to give him 10 pesos a day instead of the 5 that the foreigner had offered him. He told him to get in his car and drove him to London Street at Coyoacan. It was

there that Luis Mateo Martinez lived, with whom he remained. He was three days without receiving any precise instructions, and then Juan Zuniga Camacho or Pedro N. came, but only paid him the wages that were due to him. One day he told him to go to stay at Vienna Street, where lived Hernandez and a man called Narciso, as well as another person, whose name he did not know. He was allowed to go to see his girl, Ana Lopez, who lived with Julia Barradas at 85 Abasolo Street, near to Trotsky's home.

One day, Martinez came and told him to go to the corner of Tampico Street and the Avenue of Chapultepec at ten o'clock next morning. He went, and found Alfaro Siqueiros, who paid him his wages and said that there was not yet anything to do. About the 17th, Siqueiros arranged to meet him at the same place at five o'clock in the afternoon. At the arranged time the painter arrived, followed shortly afterwards in a car by his wife, Angelica Arenal, and Antonio Pujol. They all got into the car and returned to the centre of the town, where they bought a folding bed and some painting articles. Then they went to the village of Santa Rosa, situated between the villa Alvaro Obregon and the Desert of Lions. Siqueiros' wife and Vasquez went to a deserted house, not far from the new road. They deposited the things which they had just bought; then the wife of Siqueiros returned to town in the car, telling him to stay there until further orders.

Also staying in the house were Luis Arenal, Narciso N. and another person, whose real name he did not know, but who was called "the invalid." They stayed there for seven days, entirely inactive. On the 22nd, Siqueiros arrived and gave them some money. Narciso and "the invalid" asked his permission to go to town the next day to buy some shoes. On their return, Vasquez himself decided to go to Mexico City. But he got drunk and could not get back to the house

at the promised time. He found only "the invalid" there, who told him that the night before Antonio Pujol had come to fetch them to carry out the job for which they had been engaged. But he had only been able to take Luis Arenal and Narciso N. back with him. It was owing to this circumstance that Vasquez had not taken part in the attack.

On the 25th Luis Arenal came back to fetch "the invalid." He gave Vasquez 50 pesos and told him to clear off. He went to see Ana Lopez and Julia Barradas at Coyoacan, but found the door locked. He then hurried to 134 Liberty Street, where lived Ana's parents, and heard the news of the attack on Trotsky. Ana and Julia, whose job it was to survey Trotsky's house and win over the policemen, had received the order, through Juan Zuniga Camacho, to abandon the house at Coyoacan as soon as they heard shots fired. And this was what they had done.

Such were the first disclosures which I succeeded in obtaining from Mariano Herrera Vasquez. They might prove to be of great importance.

Thus, Ana Lopez and Julia Barradas had occupied apartments 11 and 13 in the tenement house at 85 Abasolo Street, a few steps from Trotsky's house. And both of them had disappeared as soon as the attack had been carried out. I went there immediately, in order to make a search. The two flats were padlocked. We opened that occupied by Julia first. We at once noticed a strong smell, which made us think there was an abandoned corpse there. We immediately thought of Sheldon. But when we switched on the light, we saw that there was no corpse. On the table was an earthenware jar, containing decomposed food, and it was from this that the smell emanated.

In going through the contents of the flat, we found among other papers, a rough sketch, not too well done, of Trotsky's house, documents proving that Julia belonged to

the Communist Party, and several communications from the latter. On one of the leaves of a school note-book notes were written in pencil to the effect that Trotsky was not to be killed, but simply that his archives were to be seized, and that he was an obstacle to the triumph of the Communist cause. That had no doubt been written by Julia Barradas herself. Was that what she had been assured by her chiefs? Probably. In any case, it seemed to reveal quite a lot to us. Doubtless she had written it to convince herself that she was carrying out an important mission to appease her conscience, and had then forgotten it in her hurried flight. But could she sincerely believe that it was not a question of assassinating Trotsky, but simply of seizing his records? What she certainly had believed, as all the fanatical militant Communists believed, was the second part: that Trotsky was a serious obstacle to the triumph of Stalinist Communism.

We also found a paper on which were written these words: "Have come to fetch you, but you weren't in. Shall come back at four o'clock. Pedro." Finally, we took away several photographs, among which was one of Mariano Herrera Vasquez and another of the little daughter of Julia, called Sovietina. This unusual name was in itself proof of the Soviet-Communist fanaticism of the parents.

We then went into the flat belonging to Ana Lopez. On the bed were several parcels of clothes, as though the occupant had been preparing to leave the apartment. The papers which we found proved that Ana, too, was an active member of the Communist Party. We also took away several photographs.

The role played by these women was clear: they were to observe the comings and goings to and from Trotsky's house, the changes of duty of the outside guard, and above all to become intimate with them and to bribe them if necessary. Julia had not hesitated to give herself to one of them. And,

according to the declarations of the police officers themselves, the girls, under the pretext that they had shortly to leave their rooms and go to live in town, had suggested organising a dance party on exactly the night when the attack was to take place, with the very clear object of getting the greatest number possible of them as far away from the house as they could. As can be seen, everything had been minutely prepared, according to the best methods of the G.P.U.

I now had to arrest the two women. It was not going to be easy to find them, for their tracks had been lost since the night when they had hurriedly abandoned their rooms in Coyoacan. I ordered the police officer Pedro Castenada to set about looking for them, without any other guide than the photographs of Julia and her daughter Sovietina. This officer took on the thankless task of going from house to house throughout the whole of Coyoacan and the surrounding districts. It was like looking for a needle in a haystack. This enquiry lasted several days, and during all that time the Mexican Press never ceased asking for fresh information on the progress of the investigation. It is true that the public was pressing for it, and, hungry for news, demanded daily reports. The general opinion was either that the police were no longer interested in the matter or that they had adopted the tactics of silence so as the more easily to arrive at their final conclusions.

One morning I arrived at the office very angry; one of the chief dailies of the capital had that morning published the news, quite false, that the direction of the enquiry was to be taken from me and given to a well-known detective. Was this a method of forcing me to give them information and thus satisfy public opinion? They added that this measure was due to the fact that I had lost the thread of the enquiry, that I had missed my bearings and was inactive. My pride

was terribly hurt—the pride which, among us soldiers, is so easily inflamed. Happily, at that moment, we found a new track; we discovered Sovietina—sent there by Julia a few days before the attack—at her grandparents' house.

The latter told us, as did Vasquez: "They must be hidden in Coyoacan, in Churubusco, in Zacahuisco. . . ."

I had just started the day's work in my office when I received a telephone call from Castenada.

"At last we have succeeded, Colonel," he cried joyfully. "I've put my hands on Julia. I found her at Churubusco. She's here, in my car. I am speaking from the Children's Hospital. I am at the train stop of that name and will await your further orders."

"Bravo, Castenada!" I replied. "Don't move. I'm coming. Wait for me."

I left in great haste, followed by my assistant, Señor Quezada. At the door of my office we collided with a journalist belonging to the paper which had published the article which had so upset me.

"Hullo, Colonel," he greeted me.

And when I had replied to his greeting:

"What news on the Trotsky affair?"

"None at all," I replied. "You are doubtless better informed than I am. Why don't you go to see my successor? He will give you all the information you wish for."

Without waiting for the lift, I rushed down the stairs four at a time. How many times had I not done so? We took the car and a few minutes later I had another link of the chain in my hands.

Julia Barradas was quite a pretty woman, with black eyes and hair and a graceful carriage. When we went through her bag she tried to hide among her papers a ticket for the National Lottery. We immediately seized it. On the back was an address. I sent Castenada to check it. It was Ana Lopez'

new dwelling place. She was arrested a few hours later.

I was not slow to realise that it would be difficult to make them talk. They gave us much more trouble than the men. We spent seventy-two hours in questioning them. Julia was haughty, almost provoking. Suddenly, I had an idea how to make them talk. I told her that it was her husband, David Serrano Andonegui, husband at the same time of another woman, who had denounced her.

"It's not true. It's not possible," she replied sceptically.

"No? Very well, I'll prove it to you. You'll see."

I made her hide behind a door and gave the order for Serrano Andonegui to be brought in. Not knowing that Julia was listening, he started to say the most unpleasant things about her in answer to my questions. Furious, Julia rushed into the room and declared that she was ready to tell the whole truth. This ruse had succeeded where hours of perseverance and fatigue had failed.

To make Ana Lopez talk, I had to use different tactics. I told her that it was useless to deny anything, since her companion had confessed all. And I repeated several of the points in her declaration. I also told her that I was going away for about three weeks, and that her situation would not be very pleasant during that time. She then decided to talk.

I had finished by unravelling all, or almost all, of the skein. I now had all the threads in my hands, knew the names of all the principal actors, and the role played by each one of them. But what had happened to Robert Sheldon Harte? Where were David Alfaro Siqueiros, Antonio Pujol and Juan Zuniga Camacho? There was much to be done before my work was finished.

V

The Corpse of Sheldon Harte

It will be remembered that Mariano Herrera Vasquez had spoken of a house at Santa Rosa, on the Desert of the Lions road, to which Angelica Arenal, wife of David Alfaro Siqueiros, had taken him in her car. It seemed that an inspection of this spot was necessary. I decided to go there without further delay.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when we started out, in several cars, towards the Desert of the Lions. I had with me, among others, Funes, Sanchez Mondragon and Medina.

We stopped about thirteen miles out. We had to climb up a steep slope with slippery steps. Night was falling when we arrived at the abandoned house. Rain threatened. The house was situated in the farm-lands known as *rancho de Tlaninilalpa*, nearly a mile from the road. It was, in fact, a hut made of bricks dried in the sun, and with a roof made of rushes. The walls were white. The luxuriant trees which grew behind the house helped to envelop us in semi-darkness. By day, the appearance of the house was rather gay, with a magnificent view; but to stay there at night must have been very sinister.

We entered the house. The rooms above, three in all, had wooden floors. The first, which served as vestibule, was lighted by two windows, one on each side. In the middle was a pine-wood table on which had been left some newspapers and a tin of pimento in vinegar. Three pine-wood chairs stood beside it.

I examined the dates of the papers. They were all subsequent to the attack. I imagined that some of the assailants had come to hide there and, as is always the case with criminals, were curious to read what the papers had to say about the crime they had committed.

The next room, which served as a bedroom, contained a folding bed, which was strangely slashed, as though with a razor or a knife, near the head. The floor was covered with powdered lime, as if someone had wanted to cover up his traces. This room had three windows. The last room also had three, and overlooked the village of Santa Rosa. In the middle was an easel on which a canvas, still untouched, had been placed. Beside the easel were two paint-brushes and two open pots of paint. In one of the corners there was a mattress, also partly slashed. We found several cartridges for a .22-calibre gun scattered on the floor, which was almost covered with the ends of American cigarettes, among which we found an empty packet of Lucky Strike.

This seemed to me very suspicious. Poor people, and Mexicans in general, do not smoke these particular cigarettes, which are considered a luxury with us: only Americans or wealthy Mexicans could have smoked them. And what Americans or rich Mexicans could have lived in such a house? We left everything as we found it. If it should prove necessary, we could take it all away another time.

We went down a little slippery slope to examine the rooms on the ground floor. There was first a sort of out-house, the floor of which was made of flattened earth. Then came the kitchen, with the same sort of earth floor. There were four stones placed in a square, which must have been used by the previous occupants. Everything gave the impression that floorboards were shortly to be laid, for all the materials for the work were there. And that was all. Had we made a fruitless journey?

We were on the point of leaving when the police officer Emilio Sanchez—he was shortly to die of a fistula—pointed out to me that part of the earth was softer than the rest, which seemed to indicate that it had recently been dug over. We looked for something with which to dig over the soil, but could find nothing. I went outside, and looked in the direction of the village. Not far away I saw a peasant who was working the ground with a pair of oxen. I asked him to be so good as to come with a pickaxe. He did so. At my request he started to dig over a radius of about half a yard.

The earth was easily dug, which proved, as we had thought, that it had been disturbed shortly before. About a foot down, it began to come out mixed with lime. Then night fell; we were in total darkness. We had to make do with our pocket lamps.

The peasant continued to dig. We saw that he was sweating, but he never thought of resting, nor we of asking him to do so, such was our anxiety. The blows of the pickaxe resounded throughout the house.

Our feelings became more intense as the hole became deeper. About another foot down, a strong smell became apparent. We looked at one another, breathless.

“A corpse!”

We begged the peasant to dig more quickly. We were consumed with impatience. Soon something appeared which resembled a human stomach. The peasant interrupted his task and looked at us, very upset. We were all a little pale, unable to move our eyes from the terrible sight.

“There is no doubt,” I said, “about its being a dead body. Do not continue, my good man. The complete exhumation must be carried out in the presence of the proper authority.”

I left the peasant and some of the police officers there, and went with the rest at top speed to San Angel. I immediately got in touch with the magistrate and the Public

Prosecutor's Department. Whilst they collected their personnel, I went by car as far as Tacubaya, to get the help of a team of firemen with their tools, so as to facilitate the exhumation of the corpse. Then I got in touch by telephone with police headquarters, asking them to send me immediately the identification staff, in charge of Major Galindo.

I got back to San Angel about midnight. From there, I informed General Nunez by telephone of the discovery that we had just made. He gave me some instructions on the matter. And then we again started for Santa Rosa.

The rain fell in torrents. The capital, wrapped in the dark night, appeared in the distance to be a fairy panorama, sprinkled with stars. The thickness of the wood made the night still darker. We arrived at the foot of the slope which led to the house of the crime and, leaving our cars there, began the difficult ascent in Indian file. We slipped in the mud and stumbled continually. The rain whipped our faces and streamed down our raincoats. At last we arrived, breathless and covered with mud, at the house containing the dead body.

We put on gas-masks and went into the kitchen. The peasant and the police officers we had left were still there. The firemen started to work with their axes. We followed their efforts with growing anxiety.

What secret were they going to uncover for us? The outlines of the corpse began to appear more clearly. The firemen were careful not to damage it with their tools. When they had exhumed as far as the knees, we thought they had reached the feet. It must be a tall man! Wrapped in the lime, he had the air of a giant. One would have said that he measured nearly six feet six inches.

"Be careful with the head," we repeated incessantly.

At last, the body was completely uncovered. The chief

means of identification was the hair. I had a lock cut off and went out to wash it in a puddle. By the light of my electric torch, it appeared a reddish colour.

"According to the description we've been given, it must be Sheldon," I said to everyone present.

Sometimes the action of lime can change the colour of hair; that is why, on returning, to the kitchen, I proceeded to make a careful examination of the body. It was in an advanced stage of decomposition, doubtless due to the action of the lime, which made it seem surprising that it had been preserved intact. It had acquired an impressive bronze colour.

The red hair, in the bluish light of the lanterns, gleamed like molten metal. The head was turned towards the right; one arm was lying across the stomach and one of the legs was half-bent. They must have thrown him into the hole and covered him, just as he fell, first with lime and then with soil.

The lime had bleached his hands and face more than the rest of his body. His chest was protected by a sweater of navy-blue wool, buttoned up to the neck. Under the sweater he wore a short-sleeved linen shirt and underpants.

I had a piece cut off, which I kept in my possession. Had they taken off his clothes to make his identification more difficult, or had they murdered him while he slept? I could not be sure until I had had the body washed and had carefully examined the wounds. I had a stretcher made, on which the body was placed. He looked strangely white, as though wrapped in a shroud.

Before leaving I made a fresh examination of the house. I came to the conclusion that the crime had been committed on the upper floor, in the room which served as a bedroom. The blood had run between the floor-boards, which explained why they had been covered with powdered lime.

In the ground-floor rooms I discovered coagulated blood; it had trickled through the ceiling from above. The manner in which the crime had been committed began to appear fairly clear to me.

I sent a few of my officers to make a search round about, outside the house. In spite of the darkness of the night, they discovered traces of large fires not far away. In turning over the ashes they found the remains of a navy-blue sweater and a pair of trousers, shirt and trouser buttons, as well as pieces of cloth and mattress cover. They were pieces of the canvas bed and mattress cover which had been cut, doubtless to destroy the blood-stains. This proved that the crime had been committed while the victim had been asleep on his bed.

I went down the hill and, accompanied by an officer, got into my car and went at top speed towards Coyoacan. It was four o'clock in the morning of June 25th. Exactly a month and a day had passed since the attempt on Trotsky's life, at that same hour.

It was still raining. Vienna Street was inundated. I stopped in front of the armoured door of Trotsky's house. I pressed the electric bell persistently. Immediately lights appeared in the entrance and in the battlemented tower, where a guard stood with machine-gun ready. A dazzling light above the door almost blinded me. Otto Schuessler opened the door slightly, revolver in hand. As soon as he recognised me he signalled to the guard in the tower to open the door.

"Good morning, Otto," I said to him as I went into the courtyard. "I must see Don Leon immediately. We have found Sheldon's body."

"Sheldon's body?" he exclaimed. "How? Where? Come, come. Tell us. . . ."

And he shouted:

"Harold! Harold! Come quickly!"

Harold came running up. His face, like Otto's, showed great consternation.

"Wait!" I said. "I want to be sure that it is Sheldon. Have you any underwear belonging to him? I want a shirt and a pair of underpants."

"Yes, yes. At once!"

Otto hurried away and soon came back with the articles I had asked for.

"Here you are. Here is Bob's underwear."

I compared them with the piece I had cut from the shirt of the corpse. They were of the same stuff. I showed the lock of hair to Otto and Harold.

"That's Bob's hair," they said. "Bob's without any doubt."

Harold went to Trotsky's room. He came back saying that the Russian ex-Commissar was sound asleep and that he had not wanted to wake him. I remembered that the old revolutionary took drugs to help him sleep. Perhaps he was under the effects of one of them. Or perhaps Harold had awakened him, but the effect that the news had had on him had been such that he preferred to be excused.

"Can one of you come with me to identify the body?" I asked.

Otto decided to accompany me. We took the car and drove at top speed towards Santa Rosa. We arrived at the foot of the slope at dawn. The soaked earth made the ascent extraordinarily difficult.

The body was lying on the stretcher where I had left it, outside the house: all those present formed a circle round it, some with their handkerchiefs to their noses on account of the terrible smell. The rain had stopped. Otto looked at the body, obviously moved. He had immediately recognised his comrade.

A gruesome procession was organised: after the body

followed the magistrate, the police officers, a few journalists, among whom was the tireless and talented "Major Telley," as we affectionately called him. I do not remember ever having seen such a moving sight.

It was daylight when we arrived at San Angel. The corpse was placed in a courtyard. General Nunez arrived shortly afterwards, and gave the order for it to be washed. Then he had the guard strengthened, for the news had spread throughout the town and inquisitive crowds began to arrive. The formalities finished, the magistrate left.

All at once a movement occurred among the crowd.

"Trotsky! Trotsky!"

It was indeed he. Ten o'clock struck. The old Russian exile approached the body. He looked sad and depressed. He stood for a long moment looking at his ex-secretary: his eyes were filled with tears. This man had directed a great revolution, he had survived bloody battles, he had seen his friends and his family disappearing one by one, he had remained unmoved by an attack which had almost cost him not only his life, but also his wife and grandson—now he wept in silence.

Sheldon's body looked like an overturned statue. In spite of its having been washed, a mixture of lime and clay adhered to the gleaming wet skin. The sight of him produced a strange impression. He retained the calm attitude of a man who sleeps; his face, to which still adhered traces of the lime, showed not the least signs of anger or anxiety. His closed eyes, his mouth in repose, his relaxed limbs, all indicated that he had been killed while sleeping. There were two holes in his head, both on the right side, which proved that he had been lying on his left side when they had fired point-blank at him. One of the bullets had remained in his head. If ever there were treachery, it was here!

When Trotsky had mastered his emotion, he asked to be

taken back home. General Nunez decided to accompany him.

In the course of the autopsy on Sheldon the bullet which remained in the head was found. His two thumbs, as well as the index and ring fingers on the left hand, were cut off, so as to prove the identity of the body by a comparison of their prints with those on his immigration papers. A part of the cheek was also cut away so that the identity section of the police could study the growth of the beard and so determine the exact date of the murder.

I had a cablegram sent to Robert Sheldon Harte's father who had cabled to ask us to inform him immediately if the body we had found should prove to be that of his son. And I decided to continue my investigation without losing a moment. Had Sheldon been the accomplice or the victim of the assailants? If he had been an accomplice, an agent of the G.P.U., why had they assassinated him? And which of them had killed him and then buried the body? At any cost, I must clear up this point.

I started by looking for the person who had let the cottage. At Santa Rosa we found a native, Cruz Hernandez, who, with his wife and daughter, had occupied it a short time previously. The cottage belonged to an engineer, Daniel R. Benitez, who had asked an inhabitant of the village to look after it for him. The latter had allowed Cruz to live there free of charge. On Cruz's birthday, the third of May, he was having a drink in a *pulqueria*¹ in Santa Rosa when a man, with a healthy complexion, dark and smartly dressed, came up to him and asked him if he were not the person who occupied the house on the ranch of Tlaninilalpa. On receiving an affirmative reply, the unknown man said to him in an imperious tone:

¹ A shop which sells *pulque*, a fermented drink of a milky colour, drawn from a particular type of cactus, and drunk exclusively by the Indian natives.

"Then you must leave immediately, for it has just been let to me. You will receive instructions from the engineer Benitez and Señor Lira."

Cruz then accompanied the unknown man back to the house. On the way, Cruz asked him to let them live on the ground floor, even if only in the kitchen. But the other, in a very bad humour, absolutely refused. So Cruz took his belongings and went back to the village with his wife and daughter. A few days later he noticed that the house was not inhabited. But shortly after then, on another visit which he made, he saw there were several people there, one of whom looked like a "Yank." The man whom he already knew shouted angrily at him:

"I've told you that the house has been let. I've nothing else to add. Clear off and don't let me see you here again."

And they saw no more of him.

The day after the discovery of the body Ruiz Benitez and Juan Lira arrived of their own free will at Police Headquarters. The former explained that on the first of May, on arriving home, he found a Packard car with a New York registration number, at the door. A smartly dressed man got out and said to him:

"I have come to see you about renting a house at Santa Rosa. You are the owner, aren't you?"

He replied in the affirmative, adding that the house was not in a habitable state. Upon which the unknown man declared that he was a painter, and that the Department of Public Instruction, who were interested in his work, had asked him to explain to a group of young men his methods of painting frescoes with a mixture of cellulose to prevent them from becoming effaced. When Benitez pointed out to him that cellulose served as the base for the manufacture of explosives, the other replied:

"Have no fear; it is a harmless mixture. I guarantee that

nothing will happen to your house. On the contrary, I will see that the roof and windows are repaired. Let it to me for three months."

They came to an agreement about the price, which was fixed at 45 pesos. The other promised to bring him the contract a few days later, but never came.

Thus the house had been let twenty-four days before the attack, and had doubtless been used to hide some of the assailants. And the letting had been negotiated by someone who was interested in painting. Alfaro Siqueiros? Antonio Pujol? Luis Arenal? One of the three, certainly.

On July 2nd, at the request of the lawyer representing the two Communists, Serrano Andonegui and Mateo Martinez, an important legal hearing took place before the Coyoacan Court of First Instance. The presiding Judge was Raoul Carranca Trujillo, and Moreno Tapia, representative of the Public Prosecutor, and numerous journalists were present. Leon Trotsky, Nathalie Sedova and several of their secretaries were there also. They were assisted by their lawyer, Antonio Franco Rigalt.

The interrogation lasted nearly three hours. Trotsky's replies in answer to the Communist lawyer were of the greatest interest. Some of them did no more than confirm facts already known to the police. Before passing to the part which concerned the role played by Robert Sheldon Harte, I think it useful to reproduce, for information purposes, some of the statements made by the Russian exile.

He explained in the first case that the house which he occupied had been bought at the beginning of May for the sum of 9,800 pesos. And he added ironically:

"I am not, either by birth or inclination, a house-owner. I have never previously owned one. During my stay in Norway, however, I was the object of a serious attack. Those who carried out this attack tried on several different

occasions to buy the house which I occupied. It would thus have been easier for them to prepare the blow. In Mexico, too, a similar thing happened regarding the house which I at present occupy. When my friends in New York learned about it, they asked me to tell them how much the complete assurance of my safety would amount to. As the ownership of the house was an important factor, since the G.P.U. were preparing to acquire it, I let them know, and they sent me a cheque for 2,100 dollars so that I could buy it."

In reply to the question asked by the lawyer: since when did he fear an attack against him? he said:

"It is not exact to say that I have been expecting it since the month of January. I've been waiting for it for two years. But since December or January, I have been expecting it at any moment. During the past few months my guards and I have held frequent conferences to try to take extra precautions, because the attacks in the Communist Press against me have become more and more violent. I have denounced the invasion of Poland and Finland by Russia, as well as the Moscow alliance with Hitler, and my declarations have been reproduced in all the newspapers of the world, causing an enormous sensation. The last conference of the Mexican Communist Party was influenced throughout by the battle against Trotsky and Trotskyism. Its slogan was 'Death to Trotsky.'"

But the most interesting part of the statement was that concerning Robert Sheldon Harte. To the question asked by the Communist lawyer if he believed that Sheldon had remained faithful to him to the end, Trotsky replied:

"Sheldon Harte? . . . I am absolutely sure that Robert Sheldon Harte remained faithful to his ideas, and, consequently, to me to the end, and that he died a victim to his fidelity. If I may be allowed to elaborate on this subject, I should like first of all to correct some mistakes made by

the investigators, who, although very intelligent and energetic men, have worked on a false hypothesis in this respect. Such is the impression I have of the error which has been committed by General J. Manuel Nunez and Colonel Leandro Sanchez Salazar in this instance. A very human error, certainly, but an error for all that."

I must admit that this statement of Trotsky's, which appeared in all the Mexican papers, touched me to the quick. It will be understood that I had no particular interest in the guilt or innocence of Harte. My role was simply that of an investigator who tries, by all the means at his disposal, to establish the truth. Everything showed that, contrary to what Trotsky affirmed, Harte had been a tool of the G.P.U., and that without his complicity the attack of May 24th would have been very difficult to carry out. I now had to complete my investigations.

On July 4th, Mariano Herrera Vasquez was submitted to a new interrogation. It was he who had made possible my discovery of the house at Santa Rosa and of Sheldon's body. I wanted to make him tell me all he knew. Here is the résumé of his new declarations:

On May 24th, about eight o'clock in the evening, Luis Arenal, brother-in-law of Alfaro Siqueiros, came to the farm at Santa Rosa with an American. The latter, who was very tall, had curly red hair, and spoke Spanish very badly. Luis Arenal said to Vasquez:

"I've brought you a new friend."

He did not give his name, and Vasquez did not ask him for it. Luis Arenal added:

"Each day a young woman will come here from Santa Rosa to clean up. You will tell the American to go out for a walk while she's here."

"Alone?"

"Absolutely alone."

This was a point of the greatest importance. If what Vasquez said was true, it proved that the American could come and go as he liked, quite freely. If they had taken him by force, what was to stop him from escaping?

During the time he was there, Vasquez used to visit at Santa Rosa a man called Ricardo, whose other name he did not know, for the sake of having somewhere to go. From time to time he took his meals with him. About half-past twelve one mid-day, he came back with Ricardo to the house. The American had also returned from his walk. They all three sat down to have a drink of *tequila*. On seeing that Ricardo was wearing sandals, the American took 5 pesos out of his pocket and gave them to him, asking him at the same time to buy him a pair, as his shoes hurt him when he was walking about outside the house. Ricardo took the money and promised to carry out his request.

At that moment the brothers Luis and Leopoldo Arenal arrived. They had left the car, in which they had originally brought the American, at the bottom of the slope. Ricardo's presence annoyed them. They took Vasquez apart and Leopoldo Arenal said to him:

"What's that fellow doing here?"

Vasquez replied:

"He's a friend of mine. I take my meals with him. We went for a walk and came back to have a drink of *tequila* together."

"Right. But let him clear off at once. Nobody must come here without my authorisation."

Seeing that his presence displeased them, Ricardo left. The Arenal brothers and the American started to speak in English.

"Were they talking to each other in a friendly manner?"

"Yes, sir. I could not understand what they said, but I could see that they were friends."

In the end, Luis Arenal gave Vasquez 50 pesos for the

five days which were due to him, plus 20 which were owing from the previous time he had paid him, and told him to go, and not to appear again until instructed to do so. Vasquez obeyed. The American remained alone with the Arenal brothers.

"Do you think that it was they who killed him?"

"It must be; there was no one else with him."

On the 25th of the previous month the body had been shown to Vasquez. He had recognised it immediately: it was that of the American.

"And you never knew before what his name was?"

"No, sir. As I had to call him something, I asked him what his name was. He told me that he was called Timo, Timoteo. When I asked him why, he replied that this name pleased him very much. I remember that he made me laugh at the manner in which he said it in Spanish: 'Ah! to be much pretty, name Timoteo, to be much Mexican.' That this Timo was Robert Sheldon Harte, I learned later, when the body was discovered."

Had he told me all the truth? Had he himself not participated in the murder of Sheldon? To clear up this point, I wanted to terrorise him. . . . In studying his character, I had come to the conclusion that the means which I proposed to use would be almost infallible.

One night I had him taken out of the *Pocito* and driven to the house at Santa Rosa. It was after midnight, and complete darkness surrounded us. During the whole journey I kept a stern face and hardly spoke a word to him. He appeared anxious and very upset.

We arrived at the scene of the crime. An officer was there in whom I had the greatest confidence, and who was to pose as one of the prisoners implicated in the attack, and, in addition, four members of the mounted police under the command of an officer.

"Listen, Vasquez," I said to him, "I have brought you here so that you can confess your part in the murder of Sheldon. Either you tell me the truth or I have you shot on the spot."

"I have told you the whole truth, Colonel. It is thanks to me that you got on to this track. I can't say anything more."

I decided to carry out the experiment by pretending to execute the officer who had been primed to play this role. In an angry tone, I said to Vasquez:

"This man was also concerned in the attack against Trotsky, and refuses to tell me the truth. I'm going to have you both shot."

And addressing the false prisoner:

"I give you one last opportunity to tell me the whole truth. For the last time, tell me the names of those who participated in the attack, and quickly!"

The false prisoner adopted a resolute attitude:

"I have nothing to add to what I have already said. I don't know the names you are asking me for. And even if I did know them I wouldn't tell you."

"No? Very well, then! Let him have it, lads!"

The officer was pushed up against the wall. The police got ready and, at a sign from their officer, fired blank cartridges at the false prisoner, who fell to the ground. I went up to him and gave him a kick.

"Now it's your turn, Vasquez. I'll give you five minutes in which to tell me the whole truth. You participated in the murder of Sheldon. Who were your accomplices?"

"I swear to you that I have told you all I know, Colonel! I don't know any more than what I've already told you. I swear it!"

"I will give you five minutes."

"I have a mother and grandmother to support, Colonel. I can't tell you any more, because I don't know any more."

It was evident that he spoke the truth. I was absolutely convinced Vasquez was innocent. They had used him as a tool of secondary importance. That had turned out to be lucky for him. It must be understood, of course, that I had not intended for a moment to carry out the mock execution with him, as I had done with the officer rehearsed for this role.

In any case, the enquiry clearly led to the conclusion that Sheldon was an accomplice of Trotsky's assailants. They killed him because he might prove a nuisance to them. If he had fallen into the hands of the police, he might have revealed everything. Doubtless the fact that the Arenal brothers had found the peasant Ricardo, an outside person, in his company, had hastened things on. This was also General Nunez' opinion. We could not honestly have held any other.

VI

Was Sheldon an Agent of the G.P.U.?¹

THE enquiry conducted into the attack of May 24th deserved all the public praise which Trotsky gave it. He declared: "In no other country in the world, either in France, Switzerland, or Spain, has one of the crimes of the G.P.U. been exposed with such thoroughness as was the attempt on my life on May 24th at Mexico." But Trotsky continued to address severe criticisms to the Mexican police as far as the part played by Robert Sheldon Harte was concerned. In his opinion, Sheldon Harte was the victim of the "theory" put into circulation by the G.P.U., and this point of view has since been upheld by his widow, his secretaries and most of the Trotskyists.

In our opinion, the clearing up of this point has a great historic interest. In the first place, as proof of the absolute impartiality of the investigators towards both the Stalinist and Trotskyist "theorists"; and, in the second place, as a demonstration of the methods used by the G.P.U.

In his statement on July 2nd before the Coyoacan Court of First Instance, Trotsky said: "Sheldon was sent to me by friends in the U.S.A., as were my other secretaries. He came to me with letters of introduction, but I did not know him previously. When they send me someone, my friends write to tell me what are his faults and his good qualities, so that I can let them know whether I am willing or not to accept him. I took Sheldon, but cannot remember, however, whether I replied that I would accept him."

¹ This chapter is written by Julian Gorkin.

And to the question which was put to him, whether, of all his secretaries, Sheldon was the one who inspired the greatest confidence, he replied: "No. It is probable that he deserved the same trust as the others, but as he was new, as he had only been with me for seven weeks, and as during all that time I had been very busy with my work, I knew him less well than the others: but my wife, who knew him sufficiently well, had a very good opinion of him. And I have great confidence in the intuition of my wife, who has been at my side for thirty-eight years."

So Trotsky did not know Sheldon before the latter had been recommended to him by the chief Trotskyists in New York, and since his arrival had had very little to do with him. He relied entirely on his wife's intuition. It is not possible to doubt the sincerity of Nathalie Sedova. She lived almost entirely for her husband; her great love for him was intensified by the peril to which his life was constantly exposed. In addition, there was a complete ideological understanding between them. Their lives and their struggles might be said to be one life and one struggle. Certainly she protected Trotsky's life with much more care and vigilance than she protected her own. We have seen, for example, that on the night of the attack she thought only of covering his body with her own.

Nevertheless, all the intuitions in the world do not suffice to discover the enemy's agent when the latter is presented as a friend and comrade. If this were not so, there would be no spies or *agents-provocateurs*; or at any rate not so many of them. All police services use them in abundance, particularly in an epoch such as ours. But no one has ever equalled the G.P.U. and the Gestapo in the diabolic art of preparing their agents and of introducing them into the most suitable places for the job which they are to carry out.

It is possible that in this respect the G.P.U. is better qualified than the Gestapo. Its agents are not just mercenaries attracted by the bait of profit or pushed by the spirit of adventure, but fanatics always ready to sacrifice their lives and liberty for what they imagine to be their most rigid duty. Besides, they know that on the accomplishment of this "duty" depends their own existence. In this sense, they are spies constantly spied upon, terrorists on whom constantly weighs the threat of terror. For a long time schools have existed at Moscow and Leningrad for the preparation of G.P.U. agents destined for service abroad. Trotsky well knew these schools, since he helped to create them.

At the risk of anticipating events which form the subject of this record, let us say at once that Trotsky was to become the victim, three months after the first attack, of an agent of the G.P.U. introduced into his home: the man called Jacques Mornard. He, too, presented himself as a sympathiser. He had seduced a sincere militant Trotskyist, with whom he had kept up amorous relations from the time of making her acquaintance in Paris. Through her he came into contact with the French Party members, to whom, according to the declarations made by Trotsky to one of his secretaries, he had given money for their periodicals. Not only did he manage to get inside the house of the Russian exile thanks to this girl friend, but he was also vouched for personally by two irreproachable French militants, Alfred and Marguerite Rosmer, both of them intelligent and with long experience.

Trotsky took tea, prepared by Nathalie, with Jacson-Mornard and Rosmer. The assassin-to-be cordially discussed politics with his future victim, and went so far as to bring him an article on a Trotskyist theme to correct. Here, for example, intuition was lacking in everyone. Why then admit

in the case of Mornard what is still denied in the case of Sheldon?

In an article on June 8th, Trotsky wrote the following: "However, in spite of all the precautions, the possibility of a G.P.U. agent managing to become even one of my guards cannot be excluded from consideration." And later on he adds: "Of course, I have said from the beginning to my friends that I should be the last to believe in Sheldon's participation in the attack." And in another article dated June 25th: "In fact, the entry of a G.P.U. agent into my home could mean only that the G.P.U. had succeeded in deceiving my friends in New York who recommended Sheldon to me."

As can be seen, there is a lack of conviction in all these statements. It is implicitly admitted that Sheldon might have been an agent of the G.P.U. And the same article concludes with: "All the initiated know that throughout the world all working-class organisations and State institutions are inundated by G.P.U. agents." Which, for the most part, the facts have amply shown.

It is well known that the G.P.U. never hesitates on the choice of means, even the most monstrous, when it has resolved to attain a desired end. Nothing is easier for it than to introduce its members into opposing or neutral political organisations, and even into private homes. The wish to convert which is current in advanced political circles tends to overrule the instinct of mistrust. Nor is it possible to create organisations of which the dominant qualities must be generosity and a spirit of human solidarity, in an atmosphere of distrust. In Trotsky, whose political passion overshadowed every other emotion, this desire to convert was particularly strong. It increased in proportion as his fight against Stalinism became more violent. His house was open to any newly-won supporter who wanted to see him or to

discuss anything with him, and particularly if this newcomer had come from the ranks of the official Communist Party: it was sufficient for him to be presented or recommended by a well-known militant Trotskyist. And the militant Trotskyists had the same desire to convert as had their chief. The G.P.U. could introduce with relative ease as many Sheldons or Mornards as they needed into the Trotskyist political organisations and through them into Trotsky's fortress home itself.

It would seem, then, that we can state with certainty that Robert Sheldon Harte was an agent of the G.P.U. To be sure, no one can be absolutely certain except the G.P.U. itself. It cannot be denied, however, that all the results of the enquiry lead to this conclusion. According to Trotsky and the Trotskyists, the investigators allowed themselves to be influenced by the "theory" put into circulation by the G.P.U. An impartial examination of the facts refutes such a supposition.

Nestor Sanchez Hernandez has provided us with complete statements which have made it possible to throw light on the weaving of the plot and to discover its organisers and directors. All he told us has proved to be correct. Why should he have lied only concerning Sheldon?

On the journey from Coyoacan, Siqueiros affirmed that one of Trotsky's secretaries "had been bought." Hernandez had understood shortly afterwards to whom he referred.

The door to Trotsky's house, hermetically sealed to everyone, particularly during the night, was opened without the least difficulty. According to the police who were on guard, such a thing could not have been possible without the complicity of someone inside.

The Trotskyists contend that, for Sheldon to have opened the door, he must have thought that one of the attackers was a friend. Nestor declared that the famous "French Jew," the

instigator of the attack, was a friend of Sheldon. The "French Jew's" underwear indicated that he had come from Paris, or had passed through Paris before arriving in Mexico via New York. That he had been in New York was proved by the number-plate on his car. Sheldon had also arrived from New York seven weeks previously.

After the firing, the police officers had seen Sheldon go out without showing any signs of having been violently treated by the attackers. They did not clearly specify whether they had seen him come out on foot or in one of Trotsky's cars. Nestor Sanchez declared that Sheldon had driven one of the cars, the one occupied by the "French Jew," Siqueiros, Pujol and himself. That seems the most probable. Sheldon was accustomed to driving Trotsky's cars. He alone could have known where the ignition keys were left. In his declaration of July 2nd, Trotsky says: "The car ignition keys were always left so that, in case of danger, no time was lost in looking for them, and the person on night duty always knew where they were."

Afterwards came the statements made by Mariano Herrera Vasquez. They also have proved to be correct. Thanks to them, the police were able to find the house at Santa Rosa and Sheldon's corpse. According to Vasquez, Sheldon was allowed to wander freely around outside the house which served him as refuge. If he had been kept there against his will, would he have been allowed such freedom? And would he not have taken advantage of it to escape and reveal all?

But there is his murder. . . . In a declaration published the same day as the body was discovered, Trotsky affirms: "The body of Robert Sheldon Harte is a tragic denial of all the slanders to which he has been subjected, and to the false accusations levelled against him." We are sorry to have to disagree. It is not the first time that the G.P.U. has rid itself of one its agents after having used him. Trotsky knew

better than anyone that this happens fairly frequently in the affairs of this sinister terrorist organisation.

Stalin has shown no hesitation in getting rid of all the great militant Russian Bolsheviks. He has also had executed a great number of militant Germans, Poles and Hungarians and he did not hesitate either to dispose of Yagoda, Chief of the G.P.U., who prepared the first Moscow trial, or the diplomats and the principal G.P.U. agents sent to Spain during the Civil War. Why then should he hesitate to destroy Robert Sheldon Harte?

It is evident that Sheldon knew too much. He probably knew the connection existing between the G.P.U. agents in U.S.A. and in Mexico. He could have told who was the "French Jew." Perhaps he also knew that Jacques Mornard was not a militant Trotskyist, but the agent of the G.P.U. destined to commit the murder in case the first attempt should fail.

What could they do with him? It was very difficult to get him out of Mexican territory, for he was being searched for everywhere. The police had his photograph and had sent his description to all the frontier posts, ports and stations. If he fell into the hands of the police, which must happen sooner or later, he could be made to talk. The dead do not talk. He was killed while he slept, full of trust, beside those who had been ordered to get rid of him.

We have, in addition, the statement made by Sheldon's father. He thought that his son was a Stalinist. All the family thought so. A portrait of Stalin was found in his room. The Trotskyists deny the existence of this statement. We possess the document in which it is contained: it bears the number 337, and the signature of the assistant chief of police, Alfonso Diaz Barriga. The date of the document is May 29th, 1940. This statement was made at the American Embassy with the aid of an interpreter. As soon as he knew about it, Trotsky

telegraphed to Mr. Jesse Sheldon Harte to ask him for confirmation, and the latter denied having made it. It must be considered, however, that the Sheldons are a respectable, well-to-do family, with many friends, and may not have wished their name to be disgraced by admitting that Robert had served as the instrument of such an abominable organisation as the G.P.U. Or it may be contended that this declaration was the result of a misunderstanding. In any case, the document exists.

There also exists a statement made by Madame Fanny Yanovitch, Trotsky's Russian secretary—a statement of unquestionable value. On May 23rd she and Trotsky worked from half-past seven in the morning to eleven o'clock at night on an article intended for the American Press. From six o'clock in the evening she noticed that Sheldon showed evident signs of nervousness. She had never seen him like this before. On various occasions he asked her when she was going to finish her work, for it was he who was to drive her home. In the end, he became so annoying that, in spite of the gentleness of her character, she became angry with him. He spoke to her once about the alarm apparatus: she must be careful to keep away from the window and avoid touching the wires. Madame Yanovitch asked him to lend her his fountain-pen to make some corrections, but when she said she would return it in the morning, he protested: "No; not to-morrow. I must have it to-day."

When he drove her home, after eleven o'clock and in beating rain, they saw another car with powerful headlights coming along Vienna Street. Madame Yanovitch, who was sitting beside him, said that it was perhaps Trotsky's other car driven by one of the secretaries, who had gone out with his wife, recently arrived from New York. Sheldon said categorically: "It's not our car."

It was not, in fact, theirs. The car in question turned round

and followed them for a moment, always with its headlights on, which prevented her from seeing who was inside. During the journey Sheldon asked her several questions on the biography of Stalin which Trotsky was writing. He could not understand the text, because it was written in Russian. It is evident that this book was one of the greatest pre-occupations of Stalin and the G.P.U. The next morning, after the attack, she remembered all these details and communicated her suspicions to Trotsky. The latter shrugged his shoulders and said: "Pure coincidence."

Madame Yanovitch is firmly convinced that Sheldon, with whom she came in contact every day after his arrival from New York, was an agent of the G.P.U. It is evidently a question of a retrospective impression, based on facts to which, at the time, she had not paid much attention, but which, put together later, constituted quite a revelation.

Why did Trotsky and the Trotskyists so obstinately deny what is apparently so evident? No one doubts their sincerity. At the end of his article on June 25th, Trotsky wrote: "Bob is not the first person near to me to fall under the blows of Stalin's mercenaries. I am not counting the members of my family, two daughters and two sons, killed by the G.P.U., nor, for the moment, am I considering my devoted partisans who were physically exterminated in the U.S.S.R. and other countries. I am speaking only of my secretaries, seven of whom have either been pushed to the point of suicide by persecution or shot or assassinated by G.P.U. agents: M. Glasman, G. Boutov, Y. Blumkine, N. Sermutz, I. Pornansky, R. Klement, E. Wolff. In this list, Robert (Bob) Sheldon Harte occupies the eighth place, but I fear it will not be the last."

Trotsky had lived in hatred of the G.P.U. for many years, ever since the moment when his bitter struggle with Stalin had begun after the death of Lenin. He found the G.P.U.

always in his path. He was prepared for its crimes every day, every minute. And he knew better than anyone else its diabolic art. All this created in him an unusual state of mind, the psychology of a hunted man. Even while admitting the possibility of Sheldon's complicity in the attack, he wanted to believe with all his strength that, as with his other secretaries, Sheldon, too, "had died for the ideas which he held," and that "there was no stain on his memory."

If this is not so, there is no reason why he should have had a plate put up at the entrance of his house to the memory of Robert Sheldon Harte. This plate still exists and is face to face with the modest and simple stone bearing the name of Trotsky which stands in the middle of the garden.

Was there a certain political calculation mixed with this feeling? The discovery of an enemy spy always creates a certain demoralisation in the ranks of the partisans. In addition, if it were admitted that Sheldon was a spy, that would place the question of responsibility on the chief Trotskyists in New York, who had sent him to Mexico.

We do no more than mention this aspect of the question. Let each one draw his own conclusions.

PART TWO

THE DEATH

VII

They have wounded Trotsky!

TROTSKY thought, as I did, that it was only by a miracle that he had escaped the first attack. But the most surprised were no doubt the assailants. An attack so well prepared, with such formidable material means, such expenditure of money, a technique so perfect, and . . . the only result had been to stir up public opinion and put the victim more than ever on his guard. It was equivalent to a battle lost.

I had heard Trotsky say after May 24th: "Fate has granted me a reprieve. It will be of short duration."

He had pronounced these words in a calm and grave tone, regarding me through his tortoiseshell glasses with his piercing blue eyes, and on his face an expression of challenge. He seemed to be making a comment of no importance, even though his life was at stake. He was convinced that a new attempt would soon be made. Stalin had no doubt given strict orders: the agents of the G.P.U. who received them would have to carry them out at all costs. Their own lives would be at stake. Kill, or be killed: such was, without a doubt, the terrible dilemma which faced them. But who were these agents? Were they in Mexico? Were they in touch with the first assailants who had not yet been captured by the police? And what would be their new plan? All this formed an impenetrable mystery for the police and for Trotsky himself.

For the needs of the investigation and for purposes of surveillance I had to remain in touch with him during the three months which followed the first attack. Trotsky was an

exceedingly energetic man, courageous and cool. A long life consecrated to the revolutionary movement, the historic events in which he had played a most important part, and the intense persecution to which he had been subjected had made him into a being of exceptional character. I still remember with admiration and astonishment the serenity with which he had received me half an hour after the attack on May 24th. No one would have thought that he had just passed through so terrible an ordeal. I am a soldier, and as such I have taken part in many cruel battles: for years I have lived among men to whom death was familiar. Consequently, I readily appreciated the courage of such a man as Trotsky. Even so, I greatly admired his calmness and firmness as he faced this danger which never ceased to threaten him.

A soldier knows more or less who is his enemy, the arms he will use, the approximate spot where death threatens, the way in which it may come; he goes to meet the danger, forced on by the feeling of duty, fully conscious of the mission he is accomplishing. Trotsky, however, felt himself constantly menaced, but without knowing from where exactly death would come. To face the menace of this terrible persecution, of this danger without definite form, demands a special sort of courage. Trotsky possessed this courage. He struggled against the invisible web which was being woven about him. He was determined to defend himself—to defend not only his life but his political ideas. The two could hardly be separated, for he lived only for his ideas.

Behind his walls of concrete, which served at the same time as refuge and prison, he defied the immense power accumulated by Stalin and his terrible political organisation, the G.P.U. Looking at the great material precautions which he had taken after the attack of May 24th, I said to myself:

"In spite of all this, he is doomed!" But appraising his health, the energy which shone in his eyes, the firmness of his features, the force of his whole personality and the confidence in himself which he showed, I added: "This man will not let himself be beaten easily." Although I was far from sharing his political ideas—I have never been attracted by Communism, under any of its forms—it seemed to me that he ought not to die.

However, on August 20th, 1940, about a quarter past six in the evening, the terrible news reached me: "*Trotsky has been fatally wounded!*" The news moved me deeply, but without causing me any surprise. It affected me not only as Chief of Secret Police, but also as a man. The G.P.U. had proved stronger than he, with all his energy and all his precautions—and stronger than the Mexican police, who had had the task of protecting him. For my first thought, obviously, was that it was a new attack on the part of the G.P.U. Was the injury really serious? Could he be saved? Who had carried out the attack this time? Such were the questions which I now had to solve.

I was absent when the news reached Police Headquarters. Galindo rushed to Coyoacan. In the twinkling of an eye the whole police organisation had been put into motion: motor-cyclists from the patrol service, lorries full of policemen, officers of the secret police, ambulances of the Green Cross, preceded by the tragic wail of their sirens, rushed at full speed to this historic spot,¹ usually so calm and still.

¹ Coyoacan was the capital of the Marquisate of the Valle de Oaxaca, the title granted by Charles V to Fernand Cortez. It was from his headquarters there that the Conquistador directed the taking of Tenochtitlan. In his will, Fernand Cortez expressed the desire to be taken back to the New Spain and buried in the Franciscan Convent of Coyoacan. And it is at Coyoacan that he built his palace, which is now used as the Town Hall and Tribunal.

General Jose Manuel Nunez, Chief of Police, had been one of the first to be advised. When Galindo arrived, General Nunez was in the act of arresting the attacker, who was covered with bruises inflicted by Trotsky's secretaries. The latter had handed him over to the police on guard duty, who had seen him enter half an hour previously. He was considered to be a friend of the Russian exile's, so that they had not thought of refusing him entrance. The same thing had occurred with Trotsky's secretaries, who, it seemed, had had full confidence in him. Shortly afterwards they had heard the alarm signal. Not knowing what was happening, but fearing a new attack, they had prepared their arms and taken up their allotted positions. But they were not slow to realise, with a quite understandable surprise, that Trotsky had been fatally wounded, and that the guilty person was the "friend" who had crossed the threshold a few minutes before. They found him at once, no "friend" but an assassin.

All this had happened with surprising rapidity. Ramon Cruz, one of the employees of the Green Cross, made the following brief statement that same day:

"We received the call direct from the police of Coyoacan. It was exactly six o'clock. On arriving at Trotsky's house we had no difficulty in entering, but a great deal in getting out, for several people with blond hair, who spoke English, objected to our taking away the wounded man, fearing, they declared, that he might be the object of another attack. One of them said: 'The Señor Trotsky doesn't leave here before the arrival of the Chief of Police.'

"I noticed that the wounded man's wife had covered her husband with a white shawl. The Señora sobbed and held his head, which was covered with blood, between her two hands. Señor Trotsky neither spoke nor groaned. We thought that he was dead, but soon saw that he was still

breathing. While we took Señor Trotsky away, protected by a double row of police, under the personal supervision of their Chief, who looked like General Nunez to me, the 'blonds' surrounded the other wounded man, for whom an ambulance had just arrived. All that took us no more than half an hour."

After having received first aid in his home, Trotsky was speedily transported to the Central Post of the Sixth Section. The author of the attack was also taken there a few minutes after. Five famous doctors, under the personal direction of Gustavo Baz, Rector of the independent University of Mexico, immediately undertook the delicate operation of the trepanning of the old revolutionary's skull, round a wound of $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches deep, and from which spilled blood and brain matter. Trotsky bore the operation with extraordinary strength. The first medical bulletin issued that day, immediately after the operation, said:

"Report submitted by the Green Cross on the condition of Leon Trotsky: At eight o'clock, after a radiographic examination, an operation on the skull covering an area of approximately 4 square inches was carried out in the region of the right parietal bone; the following lesions were discovered: fracture of the right parietal bone with bone splinters projecting into the brain substance; damaging of the meninges and destruction of the brain substance, and hernia of same. The prognosis is very grave, although the immediate results of the operation are satisfactory."

Like a trail of gunpowder, the news spread throughout the town. I have always been surprised to note the rapidity with which sensational news can spread over a population of about two million inhabitants. Immediately, within a few minutes, it seizes hold of the public's mind: everyone talks aloud about it, friends and strangers discuss it freely; and individual consciences melt into one enormous

conscience. From all sides, all one heard was: "They've wounded Trotsky! They've succeeded at last!"

The greatest consternation was visible on their faces.

Even before Trotsky had arrived at the Green Cross a great crowd had collected in front of its doors. And it continued to grow during the hours which followed. There were numerous journalists there, Mexicans and foreigners, as well as Press photographers. They protested violently because we would not let them enter the operation chamber and because, for the first few hours at least, we would give them no information. Nevertheless, one of the cleverest of them, "blond Telley," managed to bribe one of the stretcher-bearers and slipped into the room wearing the latter's clothes and even his badges: he was the only journalist to succeed in getting information from the beginning. We had to take every precaution. Who could guarantee, in fact, that none of them was ready to carry out another attack on the life of Trotsky or on that of his murderer? Both of them had brutal enemies capable of any act of violence.

While they were waiting for news at the hospital, the Mexican police, almost in its entirety, went into action. In the first place, an investigation was made at Trotsky's home. He had been wounded in his study, the study which I knew so well, while reading an article brought to him by the murderer. The two of them had been alone there. The man had struck him a terrible blow on the head with an ice-axe, the shaft of which had been cut down, doubtless the better to conceal it. The axe was attached by a cord to the raincoat which the murderer carried over his arm. The blow had been made with the wide part of the axe. It was astonishing that, young and vigorous as he was, and using all his force to deliver the blow on Trotsky's head, he had not killed him outright.

The revolutionary's study showed traces of the fight which had taken place afterwards between the assassin and Trotsky's secretaries. The Bolshevik leader's chair lay on its side under the table. The paper-basket, also upturned, was beside the chair. The dictaphone table had fallen to the ground near the bookshelves to the left of, and near to, the window. Above the bookshelves, mounted on a wooden board, the alarm apparatus could be seen: Trotsky had not had time to use it, for his wife and secretaries had rushed to his aid on hearing the harrowing cry which he gave as he received the death-blow. Scattered on the floor were periodicals in several languages. Between the periodicals and the chair could be seen a pool of blood; it had flowed from the wounds inflicted on the murderer by the secretaries with the butts of their revolvers. The disorder which reigned in this room, usually so neat and clean, was very marked. That a man such as Trotsky should have fallen there, in his own study, leaning over his table covered with papers. . . .

In the dining-room, contiguous to the study, the table was laid for the evening meal. On the jute mat in the right-hand corner, near to the kitchen door, appeared another pool of blood. It was Trotsky's. He had fallen there, and had remained there, wounded unto death, whilst the doctor and ambulance were coming. And there he had felt that this time—yes! this time—they had succeeded. . . .

The khaki raincoat which the assassin had carried over his arm and from which he had drawn the axe was in the dining-room. In the right-hand pocket, sewn into the lining, was a coffee-coloured sheath, embroidered with silver threads, in which was found a dagger, 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches long and 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches wide, with a chased hilt. On one side of the room was the murderer's hat, grey with a black border, and near to it a few sheets of paper written in French and stained with blood. It was the article which the murderer had brought

for Trotsky to correct. And the blood belonged to the victim.

A star automatic pistol was found on the assassin, .45 calibre, registered number P.195-264, with eight cartridges in the magazine and one in the cartridge-chamber. This abundance of arms showed that the assassin intended to kill Trotsky at all costs. Why had he not used the revolver in preference to the axe? Doubtless to avoid the noise made by the shot. It was clear that his intention was to escape after having dealt the death-blow, profiting by the ease with which he was allowed to come and go. There was another detail which proved it: on arriving at Trotsky's house, and contrary to his usual habit, he had turned his car round so that it was facing the Coyoacan road. If he had not been able to use the axe to commit the crime, he doubtless intended to use the dagger, or, in case of need, the pistol, which he carried between his shirt and his trousers.

While the assassin was being taken to the Green Cross, he had handed a letter written in French to the ambulance leader. It was clear at once that it had been typed on a French typewriter. It was signed "Jac" and bore the date of the crime. And, curious thing, both the date and the signature were written in pencil. Why had he not at least typed the date in the same way as he had typed the letter? On carefully examining the text, I easily reached the conclusion that the letter had been written previous to the date shown. It was a valuable document. We would examine it later.

What was the real name of the murderer? According to himself, he had entered Mexico under the name of Frank Jacson with a false passport, which a member of the Fourth International, whose name he did not know, had given to him in Paris: but his real name was Jacques Mornard-Vandendreschd, born at Tehran, of Belgian parents. He said that he was therefore of Belgian nationality. From the

beginning I had a suspicion that all this was false. At the Immigration Office we obtained the following information: Jacson, who now says his name is Mornard, came into the country as a tourist in October, 1939, with a *visa* which was valid for six months: when this expired, he asked for an extension for a further five months, which was granted to him after he had proved that he had sufficient means on which to live. He said that he was an exporter of oil and other raw materials, which explained his need to travel. But I had to leave this part of the enquiry also until later.

About three hours after the crime was committed, Sylvia Agelof, a well-known militant Trotskyist born in the U.S.A., of Russian parents, came to Trotsky's house. She had been the intimate friend of the assassin for a long time. She was arrested, and also transferred to the Green Cross. She was about thirty years of age, blonde, light skin, medium height, small eyes. She wore gold-rimmed spectacles; judging by the thickness of the lens, she was very short-sighted. She was dressed in a white pique costume and a slightly-used brown coat. Extremely nervous and inclined to histrionics she wept constantly and assured us that Jacson had used her as a means of getting into Trotsky's house to assassinate him, and loudly cried out for us to kill him. Was she sincere, or, on the contrary, was she an accomplice of Jacson-Mornard? The clearing-up of this point would also have to come later.

The assassin and his woman friend had occupied Room 113 at the Hotel Montejo. Galindo went there and found a lot of correspondence in French, English and Russian. Translated, it did not reveal a great deal. For me it was additional proof that the crime had been premeditated and that the assassin had been careful to destroy beforehand anything which might prove incriminating.

Whilst directing the preliminary enquiries, I was rarely

absent from Trotsky's bedside. He died on August 21st at twenty-five minutes past seven in the evening, after having struggled with death for twenty-five hours and thirty-five minutes. I undertook to announce the sad news to the journalists and to the crowds in front of the Green Cross: "Gentlemen! Trotsky is dead!"

And, looking at my watch, I gave the exact time. The hundred or so Mexican reporters and foreign correspondents who were there rushed towards the half-dozen telephones which had been installed at the entrance of the building, noisily disputing priority as they went. The scramble was so violent that two telephones were broken. Their mission accomplished, the reporters returned accompanied by a legion of Press photographers and headed towards the interior of the building, squabbling over who should be the first to enter the mortuary chamber. Lying there on a modest hospital bed was the principal actor in a great historic drama—a drama which had lasted throughout the eleven years since his expulsion from the U.S.S.R. His faithful companion was at his side, weeping scalding tears: he was surrounded by the doctors who, without taking a moment's repose, had resolutely fought against death. And—irony of Fate—not far away was the assassin, lying in a nearby room.¹

¹ The whole of the Mexican Press condemned the vile attack and was greatly stirred by the death of Trotsky. The C.M.T., through the mouth of Lombardo Toledano, also condemned the attack, and with a really refined hypocrisy tried to make believe that it had been prepared by *agents-provocateurs* wishing to harm the good name of Mexico. Lombardo had odiously slandered Trotsky, demanded his expulsion from Mexico on numerous occasions, and, as Trotsky himself had pointed out in his articles and statements, had contributed more than anyone else to the creation of the political and moral atmosphere necessary for the realisation of the first attack. He could not help but know who



‘TROTSKY IS DEAD’

The autopsy took place early in the afternoon of the next day. Trotsky's chest measured $37\frac{1}{2}$ inches and the abdomen 36; the scalp was divided into sections and the skull sawn through: the brain, of extraordinary dimensions, was extracted and placed on a white enamel table. The examination showed hæmorrhage on the inner aspect of the lesion, that the orifice of the lesion was $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wide, $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches deep, and traversed the whole of the brain substance, with some loss of it. The wound penetrated the second parietal convolution, above the ridges of Rolando at $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the longitudinal sinus and at 4 inches from the right frontal pole. The latter, sectioned at the bistoury, showed that great flooding had taken place, and that the direction followed by the weapon was from top to bottom, from the front to the back, and from right to left. Thus the aggressor had not attacked his victim from behind, as was at first thought, but from in front. Perhaps that was why Trotsky had reacted immediately and why the assassin had been unable to deliver a second blow. On the interior of the lesion were clots of blood. The weapon had penetrated through the grey substance as far as the third right lateral ventricle, with hæmorrhage into it and subsequent coagulation.

were the real *agents-provocateurs*, and from where they came. In such circumstances, who could believe in the sincerity of his note on August 21st? Nobody. Antonio Pujol, who, along with Siqueiros, was the principal organiser of the attempt on May 24th, sent a letter, which was also intended for the police, to the newspaper *Excelsior*. His actual words were: "Declarations C.T.M. on Trotsky same as Chicago gangsters' technique; they condemn crime and send wreaths to victim. Lombardo Stalinist. Waiting guarantee life in danger to give myself up to justice." In spite of everything, the disciple and accomplice showed much more courage and dignity than the so-called master.

The left hemisphere weighed 1 lb. 6½ oz., and the right, where the wound had been inflicted, almost 1 lb. 6 oz.—that is, 2 lb. 12½ oz. in all. The difference of ½ oz. between the two was doubtless due to the loss of substance provoked by the lesion. The exact weight of Trotsky's brain could therefore be assessed at 2 lb. 13 oz. The brain and the spinal-bulb were bloodless, probably due to the acute anæmia provoked by the hæmorrhage. The brain, as well as the heart of the old leader, was preserved. The heart, too, was very large.

The body lay in state in the principal hall of the Alcazar Mortuary, situated in the centre of the town, and the whole population filed past it. Sadness was widespread. Albert Goldman, the American Trotskyists' lawyer, arrived by air from New York, and announced his intention of transferring the body to the U.S.A. In the meantime a sham funeral was held at Mexico City. An imposing crowd was present. Revengeful speeches were delivered at the graveside. Then the body was kept five more days at Alcazar. Washington refused permission of entry into the U.S.A. Perhaps it was better thus. The remains of the great revolutionary ought not to be allowed to cause demonstrations one way or another. Finally, the body was cremated.

Soon the whole country was singing the *grand corrido de Leon Trotsky*. The *corridos* are the popular Mexican songs *par excellence*, and apparently greatly resemble certain popular Russian songs. The authors are generally unknown. But the spirit of the people seizes hold of these songs and breathes life into them. The Bolshevik leader, tragically killed in Mexico, could not fail to have his *corrido*. We reproduce it here for the sake of its quaintness, and for its naïve and popular rhythm:

*Murio Trotsky asesinado
de la noche a la mañana*

*porque habian premeditado
 venganza tarde o temprano.
 Penso in México, este suelo
 hospitalario y grandioso,
 para vivir muy dichoso
 bajo el techo de este cielo.
 Por fin le vencio el destino
 en su propia residencia,
 donde el cobarde asesino
 le arranco abi su existencia.
 Un zapapico alpinista
 este asesino llevo,
 y al estar solo con Trotsky
 a mansalva lo ataco.
 Fué un dia martes por la tarde
 este tragedia fatal,
 que ha conmovido al pais
 y a todo la Capital.¹*

- ¹ Trotsky assassinated lay dying
 From evening to the following day
 Because they premeditated
 Revenge sooner or later.
 He thought that in Mexico, on this soil
 Hospitable and grandiose
 To live very happily
 Under the roof of this sky.
 Finally destiny has conquered
 in his own home
 where the cowardly assassin
 snatched his life from him.
 An Alpine ice-axe
 this assassin carried
 and being alone with Trotsky
 he attacked him without running any risk.
 It was on a Tuesday in the afternoon
 this fatal tragedy
 which has moved the country
 and all the Capital.

It was not the Russian people, his own people, who could dedicate this moving song to Trotsky: Fate had decreed that it should be the Mexican people.¹

There now began for me a new and thankless task: that of trying to discover the accomplices of the murderer. I kept the latter well guarded. What surprises would the investigation hold for me?

¹ The Russian Press, "totalitarianised" by Stalin, contented itself with publishing a communiqué of seven lines on the assassination of Trotsky, which it put to the account of "a disillusioned Trotskyist." As will be seen, this was to be the theory of the G.P.U. and its tool, Jacson-Mornard. As though one could dispose in seven lines of one of the most interesting figures in Russian history, and conceal one of Stalinism's most abject crimes! And as though history and world conscience could be subordinated to the communiqué of a dictator! In the Russia of to-morrow there will be published hundreds of works on this most famous of Stalin's victims.

VIII

This is How it Happened . . .

NATHALIE SEDOVA's account which follows, so simple and so moving, has its place here. It is the homage paid by the companion, the wife. She has allowed us to reproduce it, under her exclusive responsibility.

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On Tuesday, August 20th, 1940, at seven o'clock in the morning, Lev Davidovitch said to me:

"Do you know, I feel very well this morning, better than I have felt for a long time. I took a double dose of sleeping-powder last night. I've noticed that it does me good."

"Yes; we had already noticed that in Norway, when you felt tired more frequently than you do now. But it is not the drug itself which does you good; it's the deep sleep which gives you complete rest."

"That's evident."

Sometimes in the evenings, as he was closing the armoured shutters of our bedroom, which our friends had had installed for us after the attack on May 24th, Lev Davidovitch would say:

"Now the Siqueiros won't be able to get us." And, on waking, he would say:

"They didn't kill us during the night, and still you aren't happy!"

I tried to defend myself as well as I could. Once, after this greeting, he added thoughtfully:

"Yes, Natacha; they've given us a reprieve."

In 1928, when we were exiled to Alma-Ata, and we had absolutely no idea of what Fate had in store for us, we spent the whole of one night chatting in the train which was carrying us away. We could not sleep. The life which we had led at Moscow immediately prior to our departure had been so agitated and our fatigue was so great that the nervous excitement persisted. I remember that Lev Davidovitch said to me:

"Is it better to die in bed at the Kremlin than to be deported? I don't think so!"

On this morning he was far from asking himself such questions. . . . His feeling so well made possible the prospect of a good day's work.

After having had his usual massage, he dressed hastily and went out with a firm step to feed his rabbits in the courtyard. When he felt tired it was drudgery for him, but he did it nevertheless, for he pitied these animals. To do it as he wished, and as he had the habit of doing it—that is to say, well—was difficult. In addition, he was always on his guard: he had to economise his strength for his intellectual work. To look after animals, clean their cages, etc., was a change and distraction for him, but it tired him physically and diminished his capacity for work. For whatever he undertook, he did with great energy. He could do nothing by halves, and he was incapable of languor or laziness. That is why nothing tired him so much as banal conversation. With what enthusiasm he collected cactuses to replant in our garden! He would give himself up entirely to the job, and was the first to begin, and the last to finish. None of the young men who went with him on these excursions was capable of keeping up with him. They tired more quickly than he did, and one after the other gave up. But he was tireless!

More than once I have been amazed as I looked at him.

From where did he get this energy, this physical endurance? Neither the ruthless sun nor the hard climbs up and down laden with heavy cactuses, had the slightest effect on him. He was hypnotised by the task in hand. Change was his only repose. Work was for him a compensation for the blows which Destiny had rained on him. And the more painful the blow, the more passionately would he forget himself in his work.

For increasingly strong reasons, our excursions in search of cactuses became more and more rare. However, from time to time, overcome by the monotony of his existence, Lev Davidovitch would say to me:

“What do you think of having a day out?”

“A day’s hard labour?” I would reply jokingly. “Why not?”

“We must leave very early. At six o’clock in the morning. Would you like to?”

“Very much. But won’t it tire you?”

“No; on the contrary, it will refresh me. And I promise you not to overdo it.”

Lev Davidovitch used to feed his rabbits and fowls himself, generally from about a quarter-past seven to nine o’clock in the morning. From time to time he would interrupt this work to dictate an order or an idea which had occurred to him. That day he worked in the courtyard without interruption. After breakfast he told me again how well he felt, that he wanted to start dictating an article on conscription in the U.S.A. And, in fact, he did begin to dictate it.

At one o’clock, Rigalt, our lawyer, came to see us. After his departure, Lev Davidovitch said to me, not without regret, that he must leave until later the article which he had started and go back to some work he was doing on the subject of the attack. He had agreed with the lawyer that

he must reply to *El Popular*, which had accused him of defamation of character.

"I am going to take the offensive and accuse them of libel," he said in an aggressive tone.

"What a pity you can't finish your article on conscription."

"Never mind: I shall have to postpone it for two or three days. I've asked them to put all the material concerning it on my desk. After lunch I'll have a glance at it."

And he repeated again: "I'm feeling very fit."

After his siesta, I saw him seated in front of his work table. He was feeling well, and I was in a happy mood. Recently, he had complained of a general tiredness, and sometimes gave way to it. He knew that it would not last, but at such moments he thought of "them" more often than usual. That day there seemed to be an improvement in his physical condition. He looked better, too. Taking care not to disturb him, I peeped in from time to time to look at him, as he leaned over his papers with his pen in his hand. "One more episode and this story will be finished," I thought. Thus spoke the old chronicler, Pimen, relating the crimes of the Tsar Boris, in Pushkin's drama, *Boris Godounov*. The life which Lev Davidovitch led resembled that of a prisoner or a hermit, with the difference that, in his solitude, he not only related events, but waged a bitter struggle against his political adversaries.

Up to five o'clock in the afternoon of that day, he dictated several parts of his article on conscription in the U.S.A. and about fifty small pages in reply to *El Popular*.

At five o'clock, as usual, we took tea. At twenty-past five, perhaps half-past, I went on to the balcony and saw him in the courtyard near to the open cage of rabbits, engaged in feeding them. Near to him was someone whom I did not recognise at once—not until he lifted his hat and came

towards the balcony. It was Jacson. "There he is again," I thought. "Why is it that he has started coming so often?"

"I've a terrible thirst," he said as he greeted me. "Could you give me a glass of water?"

"Would you like a cup of tea?"

"No, no. I ate late and I can still feel my meal there," he said, pointing to his throat. "It's choking me."

His face, in fact, was grey-green, and he seemed very nervous.

"Why are you wearing a hat and carrying your raincoat, in this sun?" (His raincoat was over his left arm, held tightly to his body.)

"But it won't last long. It's going to rain."

I wanted to reply, "It won't rain to-day." He boasted of never wearing a hat or coat, even in bad weather. But I felt put out and did not reply.

"How is Sylvia?" I asked.

He appeared not to understand. Doubtless my question concerning the raincoat and hat had upset him. He seemed lost in his thoughts. Very nervously, as though coming out of a deep sleep, he replied: "Sylvia? . . . Sylvia? . . ." And, recovering his thoughts, he added abstractedly: "She's keeping quite well, thanks." Then he went back to Lev Davidovitch.

"Is your article ready?" I asked him.

"Yes; it's finished."

"Is it typed?"

With the same hand which held his raincoat—where, as we learned afterwards, were sewn the axe and the dagger—he made an embarrassed movement and, still holding the coat tightly against him, showed me some typewritten pages.

"Very good," I said. "Lev Davidovitch doesn't like illegible manuscripts."

He had visited us two days previously, also wearing his

hat and raincoat. I had not seen him then, as I was not at home. But Lev Davidovitch had told me that he had been and that his attitude had surprised him. He mentioned the fact as though he did not want to dwell upon it, but, having noted certain new circumstances, could not do otherwise than communicate his impression to me.

"He brought me the plan of an article, or rather a rough draft. . . . It was very confused. I've given him some advice. We shall see." And he added: "Yesterday, he didn't seem like a Frenchman at all. He sat himself down on my desk and remained all the time with his hat on his head."

"That's strange," I said. "He never wears a hat."

"He wore one this time," replied Lev Davidovitch without stopping, for he was walking as he talked.

That put me on guard. It seemed that Lev Davidovitch had noticed something in Jacson which he wanted to consider before reaching a conclusion. This conversation took place on the eve of the crime.

Hat on his head . . . raincoat on his arm . . . sitting on the desk. Was not all that a sort of final rehearsal? He had done it, without doubt so as to be more assured and exact in his movements.

But who could have guessed? Who would have thought that August 20th, a day like any other, would be fatal? There was nothing to give any warning. The sun shone from early morning, as it always does in this country. The flowers opened, and the grass shone as though varnished. Each one of us did all we could to facilitate Lev Davidovitch's work. Several times during the day he climbed up the flight of steps, entered the room and sat down on this same chair, before his work-table. It was so natural, but now so terrible and tragic. None of us, not even he, foresaw the catastrophe which was to happen. And in this lack of intuition was hidden an abyss. . . .

On the contrary, everything that day was most harmonious. When Lev Davidovitch went into the garden at mid-day, and I saw him with his head bare in the powerful sun, I hurried to take him his white cap. To protect him from the sun when he was threatened by a terrible death! We did not know that he was condemned; despair was not eating at our hearts then!

I remember that while they were installing the alarm apparatus in our home, I drew Lev Davidovitch's attention to the necessity of posting a guard at the window. At that time this seemed indispensable, but he told me that it would mean bringing up the total of our guards to ten, which was more than we could afford. A guard near to the window could not save him, but the absence of a guard there greatly worried me. Lev Davidovitch was very touched by the present of a bullet-proof coat which our friends had made him, a sort of coat-of-mail. On seeing it, he remarked that he ought also to have something for his head. Lev Davidovitch insisted that the comrade on guard at the most important post should wear this coat.

After the defeat suffered by our enemies on May 24th, we knew perfectly well that Stalin would not rest there, and we made preparations accordingly. We also knew that the G.P.U. would employ a different method. We certainly did not exclude the possibility of an attack committed by someone bribed by the G.P.U. But neither the coat-of-mail nor the helmet could have saved him. It was impossible, day after day, continually to employ such means of defence. It was impossible to transform one's life into a perpetual defence. For to do so would have robbed it of all its value.

When I approached Lev Davidovitch and Jacson, the former said to me in Russian:

"Did you know? He's waiting for Sylvia to come. They are leaving to-morrow."

He wished to convey to me that perhaps we should invite them, if not to dinner, at least to take tea with us.

"I didn't know," I said to Jacson, "that you were leaving tomorrow."

"Yes, yes," he said. "I had forgotten to tell you."

"It's a pity that you didn't let me know earlier, I could have sent something to New York."

"I can come to-morrow morning."

"Oh no, thanks. That would put you out, and me too."

And, turning towards Lev Davidovitch, I explained to him in Russian that I had already offered Jacson tea, but he had refused it, for he was not feeling well, and had asked me for just a glass of water. Lev Davidovitch looked at him attentively, and said with a suspicion of reproach in his voice: "You aren't very well again? You are not looking well either. You must be careful!"

There was silence. Lev Davidovitch did not want to leave his rabbits and did not seem disposed to read the article. But, overcoming his disinclination, he said: "Shall we read your article, then?"

He unhurriedly closed the cage doors, and took off his working gloves. He was careful with his fingers, which were easily injured, a fact which annoyed him each time, for it prevented him from writing. He took as much care of his pen as of his hands. He brushed his blue overalls and went slowly and silently, with me and Jacson, towards the house. I accompanied them as far as the door of the study. The door closed, and I went into a neighbouring room.

Hardly three or four minutes had passed when I heard a terrible, heart-breaking cry, without realising at first who had uttered it. I rushed out. Lev Davidovitch was standing in the doorway, between the dining-room and the balcony, leaning against the door-frame. His face was covered with blood, through which his blue eyes, without his glasses,

clearly shone, and his arms were hanging limply at his side.

"What's happened?" I asked. "What's happened?"

I put my arms round him, but he did not reply immediately. I asked myself whether something had not fallen from the ceiling which was under repair. But why was he there, in that spot? Calmly, without anger, without sorrow, he said: "Jacson."

It was as though he had said, "There it is. It's done!" We took a few steps, and, with my help, he lay on the mat on the floor.

"Natacha, I love you."

He pronounced these words in such an unexpected manner, so grave, almost severe, that I found myself suddenly bereft of all force. I leaned over him: "Oh . . . Oh . . . No one should enter here without being searched!"

And, slipping a cushion under his wounded head, I carefully placed a piece of ice on the wound and wiped off the blood which covered his face with a piece of cotton-wool.

"Sieva¹ must be kept out of all this," he said.

He spoke slowly, with difficulty, but without realising it.

"You know, there . . ." And he indicated the door of his study with his eyes. "I felt, I understood what he wanted to do. He wanted to . . . again, but I prevented him."

"But I prevented him."

There was a certain satisfaction in his words. Then he turned towards Joe, kneeling as I was on the floor, on the opposite side of him, and started to speak in English with him. I tried to understand what he was saying, but without success. At that moment I saw Charles enter the study, very pale, revolver in hand.

"What are we to do with him?" I asked. "They are going to kill him."

¹ Russian name of Esteban.

"No; they mustn't kill him, but must make him talk," he replied, articulating his words slowly and with difficulty.

Suddenly, we heard a pitiful cry. I looked at Lev Davidovitch with a questioning air. With an almost imperceptible movement of the eyes, he indicated the study door and said with a detached air: "It's he. . . . Has the doctor arrived yet?"

"He's coming at once. Charlie has gone to fetch him in the car."

The doctor came, examined the wound, and declared, obviously moved, that it was not very serious. Lev Davidovitch received this statement calmly, almost with indifference, as if, in such circumstances, one could expect nothing else from a doctor. But, speaking in English to Joe, and pointing to his heart, he said: "I feel there . . . that it is the end. This time, they've succeeded."

He obviously wished to spare my sorrow.

The ambulance, surrounded by a cordon of mounted police, advanced to the uninterrupted noise of its siren, cutting a way through the medley in the town, through the hurrying crowds in the brightly lit streets. We bore the wounded man with deep sadness and growing anguish. He retained all his normal clearness of mind. His left hand was lying beside his body, paralysed: Dr. Dutren had told me about it after having examined him in the dining-room. The right arm moved continually, in circles, meeting mine, as if he were looking where to put it. He spoke with ever-increasing difficulty. Leaning quite close to him, I asked him how he was feeling.

"Better now," he replied.

Better now. . . . That made hope rise sharply in me. The deafening noise, the hooters of the motor-cycles, the wailing of the siren continued, but my heart was beating with hope. "Better now."

We went through the gate. The car stopped. People

surrounded us. "There may be enemies among them, as always in such cases," I thought. "Where are our friends? They must surround the stretcher."

They laid him on the bed. In silence the doctors examined the wound. On their instructions the nurse started to cut his hair. I was standing at the head of the bed. With a slight smile, Lev Davidovitch said to me: "You see, the barber also has come."

That very day we had spoken of sending for the barber to cut his hair, but we had not done so. He was reminding me of it now.

Lev Davidovitch invited Joe, who was near to me, to write in his notebook what was, I learned later, his farewell to life: "I am sure of the triumph of the Fourth International. Forward!"

When I asked him what Lev Davidovitch had said to him, Joe replied: "He asked me to make a note of something regarding French statistics."

I was surprised that he should speak about that in such a moment. It was very strange. But perhaps, after all, he did feel better.

I remained at the head of the bed, holding a piece of ice on the wound and listening. They started to undress him, and, in order not to move him too much, cut first his blue overalls with a pair of scissors, then his jacket, then his shirt. They then took off his watch from his wrist, and his undergarments without cutting them. At that moment he said to me: "I don't want them to undress me. You do it for me."

These were the last words he spoke to me.

When I had finished, I leaned over him and placed my lips on his. He responded to my kiss. I kissed him again, and he again responded. Such was our farewell. But we did not know it then.

He lost consciousness. He did not regain it after the operation. I watched over him all night, waiting for him to come round. His eyes were closed, but his breathing, sometimes heavy, sometimes calm, inspired hope. The next day passed in the same manner. About midday, the doctors declared that there was a slight improvement. But towards the end of the afternoon there was a sudden change in the breathing. It became faster and faster, filling me with a deathly terror. The doctors and nurses, visibly moved, surrounded the patient's bed. Distracted, I asked what it meant. One only among them replied that it would pass. The others kept silent. I realised then that it was a false consolation and that there was no hope. They lifted him up a little. His head drooped on to his shoulder and his arm fell as in "The Descent from the Cross" of Titian, except that this time the head was wreathed in bandages instead of a crown of thorns.

His expression retained all its purity and pride. He looked as though he would arouse himself, get up suddenly to become master of his own fate. But the wound had gone too deep. The awakening so passionately awaited did not arrive. His voice was stilled. He was no longer of this world.

The hour of vengeance will sound. During the whole of his noble life Lev Davidovitch believed in the freedom of man. His faith had not weakened during the past few years, but on the contrary had become stronger. Future humanity, freed from misery, will suppress all violence. He taught me to believe that.

IX

Jacson-Mornard's Version

FRANK JACSON, or Jacques Mornard-Vandendreschd—in order to simplify matters we shall call him Jacson-Mornard—became a real problem for me as soon as he was arrested, and particularly after the death of Trotsky. Dr. Ruben Lenero, the Chief of the Green Cross, did not wish to accept the responsibility of keeping him there. The murderer's food was brought in from outside, and he was afraid that it might be poisoned. His life was, in fact, in danger, both from the Trotskyists, animated by a natural desire for revenge, and from the Stalinists, who would no doubt wish to suppress the man who might some day disclose all. The fate which Robert Sheldon Harte had met necessarily put me on my guard.

The Licentiate Raoul Carranca Trujillo, Judge of the Coyoacan Court of First Instance, at whose disposition the prisoner had been placed, rightly considered that the local prison did not offer sufficient security. And we could not transfer him to the Penitentiary, for very probably there were among the prisoners some who were capable of killing him. Neither could the possibility of his committing suicide be excluded. According to his own statement, which we shall deal with later, his intention had been to kill himself after the murder had been committed. He said that this was why he had brought the revolver which was found on him. It will be understood that we wished to keep him alive, so as to clear

up everything concerning this assassination which had shocked the whole world.

Before moving him from the Green Cross, I wished to bring him face to face with two of those convicted for the attack of May 24th, Nestor Sanchez Hernandez and the Spaniard José Alvarez Lopez. The Trotskyists stated, in fact, that Jacson-Mornard might very well be the "friend" or the "person of confidence" who had arranged for the door to be opened by Robert Sheldon Harte. Was he the "French Jew" of whom Nestor Sanchez had spoken?

I had the bandage removed from Jacson-Mornard's head and told him to utter a few sentences. The two assailants of May 24th did not recognise him. They had never seen him. Jacson-Mornard had not participated in the attack. The "French Jew" was bigger, older, and did not wear glasses. It was clear, indeed, that they would not uselessly compromise Jacson if he were the G.P.U. agent who, having succeeded in introducing himself into Trotsky's home, was to be given the task of killing him should the first effort fail. On the contrary, he would be regarded as a valuable reserve.

One of my first tasks was to study his character. I was going to have a tough struggle with him, and for that I needed to get to know all I could about him. He seemed to be about the age he said: thirty-six. He was fairly tall and slim and exceptionally pale. This paleness was not usual with him, but was the consequence of his mental state at the moment and of the nervous tension in which he had been living recently, and in which he still lived.

It is evident that the job of killing Trotsky, by deceiving him and everyone about him, could only have been confided to someone with a strong and complex nature. In spite of that, he was no doubt suffering great internal torment. Had he been chosen for his personal qualifications? Had he been

specially prepared and educated towards this end? Was he a fanatic, or a man working solely for money, or someone who had been terrorised and given the alternative of killing or of being killed? Doubtless a little of each all at the same time. This was what must be discovered as far as possible.

His physical and moral portrait should help me. He had a strong beard, but was always very closely shaven, like an actor. And, in fact, he always gave me the impression of being an actor, a consummate actor. He was rather nervous, but with adroit self-control. He did not easily give way, even in moments of great nervous tension. He had great agility of mind, and, as far as I could judge, quite a wide culture. He was very fond of reading and had the appearance of an intellectual. He liked to eat well, and I noticed that he had a sensual nature. Surely if corruption had been involved, here was a man open to it. He was rather violent, sometimes cynical and even impertinent. He was often sarcastic. But when he was treated with firmness, he became just as humble and submissive, passing from one attitude to the other with perfect control over himself.

When he was questioned he became prudent and slippery. When he was reminded of his crime, he seemed to lose this self-control for a moment, as if he re-lived the tragic scene and again heard Trotsky's piercing scream as he received his death blow. Was he sincere? Were his gifts as an actor not sufficient? In any case, he seemed to fall immediately afterwards into a state of prostration which lasted for a long period. He smoked to excess, greedily, one cigarette after the other. On the whole he gave the impression of an adventurer, of a man who had absolutely nothing to lose.

I must begin now by examining the principal parts of the letter which he was carrying on him; I shall also reproduce the main parts of the declaration which he made to me on the

day of the crime. It was clear that he had prepared this letter or that it had been prepared for him, in the event of some hitch; he might be killed by Trotsky's secretaries once the crime had been committed or fail in some way; and, in any case, it would serve as a legal or moral alibi. Here are the extracts from the letter in question:

"GENTLEMEN,—My only object in writing this letter is to explain publicly, in case of accident, the motives which forced me to commit the act of justice which I am proposing to carry out.

"I belong to an old Belgian family. In Paris, where I studied journalism, I made the acquaintance of some young people of my own age who belonged to various left-wing organisations, and who, little by little, brought me round to their way of thinking. I was pleased I had chosen journalism as my profession, for I was thus able to fight more effectively against the present system of social injustice. It was thus that I came to know the Trotskyists, who convinced me of the justice of their ideology, and I willingly entered their organisation. From then on I applied all my energy and all my faith to the revolutionary movement. I was a devoted follower of Leon Trotsky, and would have given my last drop of blood for the cause.

"At that time I made the acquaintance of a member of the Fourth International, who, after several conversations, proposed a trip to Mexico, so that I could meet Leon Trotsky. Naturally, this journey greatly appealed to me, for it was the realisation of my dreams, and I accepted with all my heart. This comrade arranged everything for me: the expenses of the journey, papers, etc. . . . It must not be forgotten that it was impossible for me to leave the country with my own papers because of mobilisation.

"Before leaving, I was made to understand, throughout the course of numerous conversations with this comrade,

that something more was expected of me than from an ordinary Party member, but no precise details were given. I made the journey first to the U.S.A. and then to Mexico.

"Once here, I was told that I must remain for some time without going to the house at Coyoacan, so as not to draw attention to myself. It was therefore only some months afterwards that I started to visit the house at the request of Leon Trotsky, who little by little started to give me some details of what was expected of me.

"This was a great disillusionment for me, for instead of finding myself face to face with a political leader who was directing the struggle for the liberation of the working class, I found myself in front of a man who wished only to satisfy his desire for vengeance and hatred, and who used the workers' struggle simply as a means of hiding his own paltriness and selfish motives.

"After several conversations, he at last explained what was expected of me. It was then that I became profoundly disillusioned and felt the greatest distrust for this man in whom I had believed up to that moment.

"It was proposed that I should go to Russia to organise there a series of attempts against various persons, and, in the first place, against Stalin. It was contrary to all the principles of a struggle which, until then, had been frank and open, and it destroyed all my faith. However, I said nothing, for I wished to know how far the baseness and hatred of this man could go.

"I began to ask, among other things, the means which I must use to get into Russia. I was told not to worry, for, as all means are justifiable to achieve such an end, he hoped for and relied on the support not only of a great nation but also on the support of a certain foreign parliamentary committee.

"For me, this was like the last straw which breaks the camel's back, and from that moment there existed no doubt

in my mind that Trotsky's sole object in life was to use his supporters as a means of satisfying his own personal machinations. Above all, I was distressed to discover the close ties he had with certain leaders of capitalist countries and came to the conclusion that the Stalinists had not perhaps been very far from the truth when they accused Trotsky of caring as much for the working class as he did for his undershirt.

"After my conversations with him I was astonished to hear with what distrust he spoke of the Mexican Revolution and all that is Mexican. Naturally, all his sympathies are in favour of Almazan, for, apart from him and one or two of his followers, he puts them all in the same bag, criticising the policy of Cardenas and the Mexican police, which he says is absolutely corrupt. And I do not mention what he said about Lombardo Toledano and Avila Camacho, who he hopes will shortly be assassinated to leave the field clear for Almazan (and, knowing him as I do, I am sure he knows something about a plot to this end, for otherwise he would not speak as he does, since he is very fond of giving himself the airs of a prophet. It would be wise not to trust him).

"But that is not to be wondered at when one considers that he feels the same hatred for the members of his own Party who are not absolutely in agreement with him. It is for this reason, when speaking of the minority in the Party, that he always implies the possibility of a battle of another political order, and, when he says that the minority wishes to attack him one of these days, he means that a desperate struggle is going to start among them.

"One day, speaking of the fortress into which his house has been turned, he said: 'It is not only to defend myself against the Stalinists, but against the minority.' Which means that he wants the expulsion of several members of the Party.

"Regarding this house, which, as he very well says, he has had transformed into a fortress, I have often asked myself where the money came from for such a job, for, in reality, the Party is very poor, and in several countries they have not even the wherewithal to publish a Party paper, an indispensable means for the struggle. From where does this money come? Perhaps the consul of a great foreign nation who paid him frequent visits could answer that question.

"Finally, to show what little interest he had for anything which did not touch him personally, I will add that I am engaged to a young woman whom I love with all my heart, because she is good and loyal. When I told him that I could not go to Russia because I wanted first to get married and that I would go only with my wife, he became upset and told me that I must have no more to do with her, for I must not get married to someone who 'supported the minority rabble.' If, as is probable, after what I am going to do she wishes to have no more to do with me, I must say, however, that it is because of her that I have decided to sacrifice myself by getting rid of this leader of a workers' movement who has done nothing but harm it. And I am sure that later, not only the Party, but also history itself will say that I am right when they see this bitter enemy of the working class disappear.

"In case anything should happen to me, I demand the publication of this letter.

"Jac 20.8.1940."

The long declaration made by Jacson-Mornard in the observation ward of the Green Cross, a few hours after the crime, was no more than an amplification of his letter. It was of great interest, not only from the point of view of the "biography" of the assassin, but because the explanations which he had felt obliged to make would be very valuable for the investigation. This statement consists of sixteen large

type-written pages. I will give a summary of the essential parts, while advising the reader to try to bear them in mind so as the better to understand the following chapters.

According to his declaration, he was born on February 17th, 1904, at Tehran (Persia), where his father, Robert Mornard, represented the Belgian Government as diplomatic agent. He was two years old when his family left Tehran to return to Brussels. At the age of ten, following the invasion of Belgium by the German troops at the beginning of the First World War, he took refuge with his mother, Henriette Vandendreschd, in Paris. He there continued his studies, begun at Brussels. On his return to the Belgian capital in 1918, he entered the College of the Jesuits of St. Ignatius of Loyola, where he graduated. His father then insisted that he go into the Army. Shortly afterwards, he entered the Royal School of Dixmude, where he remained for two years. In 1924 he requested, and obtained, permission to go to study for three years at the Polytechnic in Paris. He then went to the School of Journalism at the Sorbonne. From 1930 he contributed to a Paris newspaper, *Le Soir*, but without receiving any salary. He did not finish his training as a journalist before 1939. During the whole period of his studies he lived in Paris, thanks to subsidies from his mother. His father, on his death in 1926, had left a fortune of between 3,000,000 and 4,000,000 francs. Jacson-Mornard has an elder brother called Robert, who belongs to the diplomatic corps. He does not know where his mother and brother are. (I will add that he married Henriette Van Prouschd at Brussels in 1934, leaving her three months later, and obtaining a divorce in 1939.)

He got to know Sylvia Agelof in Paris in June or July, 1938. He realised that she had a very wide political knowledge. They had conversations on Marxism, Trotskyism, Leninism. . . . Sylvia, who was a Trotskyist, frequently

received people of this tendency. Through her, Jacson made their acquaintance and "assimilated their ideas." Sylvia, who in the meantime had become his mistress, left Paris with a promise of marriage "when it would be opportune." Jacson-Mornard continued to frequent French militant Trotskyist circles, through which he made the acquaintance of an important member of the Committee of the Fourth International, whose name he does not know, as he never asked him for it. This man suggested to him one day that he should go to Mexico to see Trotsky, who "needed people like him." He agreed with pleasure.

No one else was concerned in the making of the necessary arrangements. As he was an officer in the Reserve, he could not leave Europe because of mobilisation, so the member of the Fourth International proposed that he change his name and procured him a Canadian passport under the name of Frank Jacson. He gave him 200 dollars for the journey. Before leaving Europe, he took leave of his mother, who gave him 5,000 dollars.

On the advice of a member of the Fourth International, he remained a month in New York and asked for a tourist *visa* for Mexico. According to this person, Trotsky had been advised he would shortly be arriving in Mexico: however he was to await a suitable opportunity to see him, without taking steps himself. Sylvia, whose health was rather delicate, came to join him in Mexico. He made the acquaintance of Trotsky three months afterwards through a militant French Party member, a friend of Trotsky's, Alfred Rosmer. We reproduce what followed in its entirety:

"Now I will tell you the reasons which made me commit the murder. I was completely disillusioned in Leon Trotsky as a political leader after he had abused, in his personal interests, my belief and faith in him just as he had abused

that of the working class. He has destroyed my personal morale, and consequently my life.

"In France I was a peaceful man, fond of my work; I had a military career in front of me more or less secure, for I was a lieutenant in the Reserve, and gave it up a month before I was due to be promoted to a superior rank. I might have been killed in serving my country, but Trotsky placed me in this dilemma—of leading an illegal life or of returning to my country to die as a deserter and a coward before the execution squad, and not in fighting in its defence. For him I had agreed to come to Mexico with a false passport. I felt myself twisted in his hands like a piece of paper.

"I had a few conversations with him, in the course of which he informed me of his plans and the manner in which he intended to carry them out. His object was to demoralise the Red Army, to sabotage the war factories, and, if possible, to assassinate the Soviet leaders. Such was, in the main, the plan which he expounded to me. Regarding those who were to help him in this project, he stated that he had sent a group of people to Shanghai, some by air in the China Clipper, and some by boat. They were to contact each other there and, on being instructed by other persons who were acquainted with all the details, were to cross Manchukuo and penetrate into the U.S.S.R. and to get in touch with his followers there. . . ."

After some digressions on the differences between the various Trotskyist factions and on his love for Sylvia Agelof, Jacson-Mornard explained the manner in which he had carried out the crime:

"I had the idea of killing him seven or eight days beforehand. I had no definite plan. I wanted to kill him and then commit suicide afterwards. I thought of using the ice-axe which I had brought from France, for I can manipulate it very well—I used to detach great blocks of ice with it in

one or two strokes when climbing snow-covered mountains. I intended to use the revolver and the dagger afterwards to kill myself, in the park *Tres Marias* or the National Park, or some other place, if I succeeded in getting out of the house. That is why I took the dagger.

"After the dealings I had had with Trotsky I felt a bitter hatred against him, for I realised that I was one of those whom he had degraded for his own advantage, for without any compunction he forced his own followers to harm themselves for his personal benefit. That is why I decided to kill him and not just to commit suicide whilst leaving him to live.

"On the day of the crime I arrived at his house about half past six in the evening. Harold opened the door for me. I met several of Trotsky's secretaries in the courtyard as I entered. They said something to me which I did not catch. I asked Harold if Sylvia had arrived, for she intended to visit the 'Old Man' one of these days; he replied in the negative. I answered: 'She will doubtless come later.' I found Trotsky feeding his rabbits. He explained to me that either wet or dry grass made their bellies swell and told me the reason, but I can't remember why now. I know nothing about keeping rabbits. He asked me if I had brought him an article I had promised to write on the question of the Trotskyist differences in the United States, and invited me into his study. There, taking the article I had written in his hand, he sat in his usual chair at his desk. I stood on his left, turning my back to him. He was very confident.

"I put my raincoat, the left pocket of which contained the dagger and the right the ice-axe, on some pieces of furniture—I don't remember which. I know only that it was against the east wall of the study, behind Trotsky. While he was engaged in reading my article, I took the ice-axe out of my raincoat and, closing my eyes, brought it down on his head.

I hit him only once and he gave a piercing shriek and threw himself on me at the same time, biting my left hand, as you can see by these three marks. Then he staggered slowly backwards.

"As soon as they heard the cry, first Harold arrived, who started to hit me with the butt of his revolver, then Charles and Hansen. I had almost lost consciousness on account of what had happened and made no effort to escape. If anyone else entered at that time I don't remember anything about it. The police came later and brought me here."

After this statement on the motives which had incited him to commit the murder and the manner in which he had carried it out, I wished to clear up certain points.

"When did you write the letter which was found on you?" I asked.

"I wrote it on the eve of the attack, in the Wood of Chapultepec."

"In the Wood of Chapultepec? But it's typewritten!"

"I bought the typewriter at the Mount of Piety for 140 or 150 pesos. I had given it to a man named Bartolo Perez or Paris, I don't know which, to keep for me. Then, after I had written the letter, I made a present of it to Bartolo, whom I thought I should not see again. I had no reason to keep it. I did not take it to the hotel, for what explanation should I have given to Sylvia?"

"Who is this Bartolo Perez or Paris? Where and how did you get to know him?"

"I met him at the Kit-Kat Club, a bar at the corner of Independence Street and Dolores Street. He's one of these men you find in any big town, ready to do anything to earn a bit of money. I invited him to have a drink and we got talking. I asked him if he could get me a revolver, no matter what make, model or calibre, and he replied that he could. On Tuesday, after I had had a meal with Sylvia, I went to the

bar in question where I found Bartolo, who had brought the gun and the typewriter. We went towards the Square San Juan. I took a wad of notes out of my pocket and gave it to him. He counted them and said that it was all right. I made him a present, besides, of the typewriter, thinking that I should not survive the crime. I wanted the revolver and the dagger to kill myself after I had killed Trotsky with the ice-axe."

"And the dagger, where did you buy that?"

"At the Langunilla, in a long street where they sell all sorts of things. I bought it at a time when I did not think of committing murder, but to decorate my room."

Before closing this first interrogation, I asked him the following question: "Do you know Robert Sheldon Harte, or Bob, as he was usually called?"

"I met him at the French Hospital, where I used to go nearly every day to see Alfred Rosmer while he was ill. As we were coming out of the hospital—his wife, Nathalie Sedova and myself—one of Trotsky's cars was waiting at the door. A young man got out, and Mrs. Rosmer said, addressing Sheldon and me: 'You two do not know each other? This is Bob—Bob, Jacques.' He told me that he came from New York and then we separated. That was the only time I spoke to him. As to his surname, I only learned it later."

"One more question, Mornard: why did you go to New York immediately after the attack against Trotsky on May 24th?"

"I went only to see Sylvia. For I cannot live without seeing her."

X

Overwhelming Evidence

FOR five days and five nights I gave myself up to the preliminary investigations and the first interrogations on the Trotsky case. During all that time I hardly took any rest. I felt the eyes of the whole world fixed on me, waiting for the results of the enquiry, from which it was hoped the truth would emerge. The Mexican and foreign journalists, who never ceased asking me for information, the diplomatic representatives who carefully followed the course of the enquiry—all demonstrated the great interest which the murder had aroused. How could I even think of sleep in such circumstances? At the end of five days we were able to put before the Public Prosecutor a report which consisted of 144 typewritten pages, chiefly containing records of interrogations.

The assassin was in our hands, but we had to find out who were his accomplices. In the first place, we had to get to know whether he had told the truth, or whether (as we supposed) he had lied in his letter and in his first declaration. I had the impression that we should never get to know the whole truth. But we had at least to try to get as near to it as possible.

In order to avoid making this account too long, I must summarise the various statements, as far as possible avoiding repetitions and giving everything that is essential to make the facts clear.

One of the first and most important statements was that

made by Jack Cooper, one of Trotsky's secretaries. He had accompanied Jacson-Mornard to the civil aerodrome on June 12th. If, as may well be imagined, Mornard was going to New York to receive his final instructions for Trotsky's assassination from the G.P.U., it was very ironical that it should have been one of Trotsky's collaborators who accompanied him.

Before the plane left, they had lunch together. During the meal, and whilst they were on their way to the aerodrome, Cooper asked him several questions. Mornard replied that he had not been in contact with the militant Mexican Trotskyists, but that he had been actively engaged in the French section of the Fourth International. He assured him that he knew the chief Party members there and that he had known Rudolf Klement very well (Klement, Trotsky's secretary, was assassinated in Paris by the G.P.U.—his headless body was later found in the Marne), as well as Leon Sedov, Trotsky's son, who died mysteriously in a Paris hospital. Might it not be concluded that he had taken part in these two murders? Anything was possible. Perhaps he had proved his worth in Paris before coming to carry out this, his greatest exploit, in Mexico. Jacson-Mornard ceaselessly deplored the death of Robert Sheldon Harte and drew attention to how near the "Old Man" had been to death. In these words, he added: "I hope that the police will soon arrest the guilty ones and that the workers will make Stalin pay for all his crimes."

On his return from New York, Jacson-Mornard showed great interest in the battle which was being waged between the majority and the minority Trotskyist factions in the United States. He said he had met quite a number of comrades there of both tendencies, and that he agreed with the majority faction, even though Sylvia Agelof belonged to the minority. He thus hoped to gain the sympathy of

Trotsky and his immediate collaborators, all of whom leaned towards the majority faction.

Jacson-Mornard was an extremely nervous man. He seemed always to be in a hurry. When he arrived at Trotsky's house he hardly even greeted them. On the Saturday which preceded the murder he arrived in his car, turned it round, and damaged the Dodge which was stationed at the door. He excused himself by saying: "I don't feel very well. I've been delicate ever since my childhood."

"Was Jacson trusted in the house?" I asked.

"He was regarded as a friend. He used to bring Nathalie Sedova presents."

"Was Trotsky armed and in a position to defend himself at the moment of the attack?"

"I wasn't there, but I know that as a general rule Trotsky carried a No. 38 Colt or a small .25 automatic."

"And Sylvia Agelof, was she trusted by Trotsky?"

"She was a friend, but not an intimate one."

"Do you think that the crime committed by Jacson was premeditated?"

"Absolutely! It has been premeditated for fifteen years. I am convinced that Jacson is an agent of the G.P.U. His own declaration shows it."

The evidence given by Harold Robins, another of Trotsky's secretaries, contains valuable details on the dramatic moments which followed the attack. It was he, who, helped by Cornell and Hansen, hit Jacson-Mornard with the butt of his revolver. Hansen entered the study repeating what Trotsky, fatally wounded, had just said in the dining-room: "Don't kill him! Tie him up and make him talk."

Robins, in a threatening voice, replied: "I have no intention of killing him. I'm going to grind his bones to powder

and riddle his body with bullets if he doesn't say immediately who sent him."

Jacson-Mornard made no reply. Robins continued: "It's the G.P.U. who sent you! Admit it!"

"No; it's not the G.P.U. It's they, they," said the assassin.

"Who? They? Come on, quickly!"

"It's a man. I don't know who he is, but he made me do it."

"How did he make you?"

"They've got something on me. They are keeping my mother a prisoner!"

He said that after a pause, as if he had thought over the reply. Robins did not believe this story of the mother being imprisoned, but thought that it was a ruse to hide the truth. As, threateningly, he repeated his questions, Jacson stated that the individual who had sent him was called Paris; then said that he was called Bartolo, and that he had known him in Paris, and had seen him three weeks before at the Kit-Kat Club, at the corner of Independence Street and Dolores Street.

Hanson then began to punch him until his hand hurt. Under the force of the blows, Jacson-Mornard began to beg: "Kill me! Kill me once for all. I don't deserve to live. Kill me. I did not do it on the order of the G.P.U. But kill me."

In his first statement, Jacson-Mornard referred to this Bartolo Paris or Perez, whom he said he had met at the Kit-Kat Club; it was the same person who, according to him, had sold him the automatic pistol which was found on him, and to whom he had given the typewriter which he had used to type the letter. . . . Who was this Bartolo? Had Mornard known him in Paris, as he had told Trotsky's secretaries, or in Mexico, as he had stated to me? Did Paris

or Perez really exist, or had he invented him? Was the chief of the G.P.U., whose tool Mornard had been, hidden behind this name? Or was it simply the first name which had crossed his mind in the moment of danger? And the part concerning Mornard's mother. Did he really not know where she was, as he had maintained in his statement, or was she held prisoner and had they used this fact to threaten him in order to force him to commit the crime? It was a veritable maze.

Charles Olney Cornell confirmed Robins' statement on all points. He added that while being beaten Jacson-Mornard had also said that he was to have met the mysterious Perez or Paris that very day at the Kit-Kat Club. Was this another invention on his part, or was someone waiting for him to hide him or prepare his escape, as soon as the murder had been committed? Surely the assassin had intended to escape, which would explain why he had left his car all ready at the gate and had used the ice-axe and not the revolver!

If Jacson-Mornard had committed the crime at the instigation and under the immediate control of the G.P.U., it was probable that he had remained in direct touch with them up to the last moment. If he had succeeded in getting out of Trotsky's house safe and sound, it was evident that it was to their interest to see that he disappeared without leaving any traces. It was doubtless with this object that Jacson-Mornard had destroyed all his personal papers—even his passport. Might not Bartolo be one of the G.P.U. agents? How discover his real name and find out where he was?

"Did you never have any suspicions regarding Jacson?" I asked Cornell.

"Never. One day I even heard Trotsky say that Jacson was one of his supporters and that he had given a lot of money to the Party in Paris. The facts now show in a startling manner

that he was a Stalinist and that it was the G.P.U. who gave the order for the crime."

Otto Schuessler, who was having a day's holiday when the crime was committed, met Sylvia Agelof and Jacson-Mornard about one o'clock in the afternoon in front of the Palace of Fine Arts. They told him that they thought of leaving for the United States the following day, and that they intended going to Coyoacan about half-past four or five o'clock that afternoon to say goodbye to the "Old Man." They invited him and his fiancée to dinner in a restaurant in the centre of the town, and decided to meet at half-past seven. Sylvia was calm and even smiling; Jacson, on the contrary, showed obvious signs of uneasiness. He was very pale and hardly spoke a word—he who ordinarily was so talkative. His manner was extremely curt, and he excused himself for leaving them immediately, saying that he had an appointment. Sylvia remarked: "His health is a little delicate, doubtless because of the altitude and the type of food he insists on eating. That is why it is just as well that we are leaving."

It seemed to Otto that Sylvia was sincere.

Exactly at half-past seven, Otto and his fiancée arrived at the meeting-place. A quarter of an hour later Sylvia arrived a little nervous. As soon as she saw that Jacson was not there, she said: "It's funny. I don't know what's the matter with him, but there's something wrong. When he is late, he always telephones the hotel. He told me that he would come to fetch me at half-past four to go to say goodbye to the Trotskys, and he neither came nor telephoned me. I was hoping to find him here."

Sylvia telephoned several times to the Hotel Montejo. Each time she seemed more nervous, wondering what could have happened to Jacson. They started to look for him everywhere they thought he might be. About ten minutes past

eight, Otto proposed to telephone Trotsky's house. Sylvia said: "It's impossible for Jacson to be there. He never goes without me."

-In spite of that, Otto telephoned. And it can be imagined with what surprise he heard them say: "Come at once. Jacson has just tried to kill 'the Old Man.' "

They took a taxi and went to Coyoacan. During the journey, Otto told Sylvia what he had just heard. Sylvia started to cry, saying: "If anything has happened, it must be serious."

When they arrived at the house and learned the details of the attack, Sylvia cried despairingly and asked to be accompanied to Police Headquarters. She was arrested there and taken to the Green Cross. Otto thought that Sylvia was innocent.

But was she really? Both Nathalie Sedova and Trotsky's secretaries were of this opinion. I admit that, for my part, I was rather sceptical. How was it possible for her to have lived for such a long time with Jacson-Mornard without being his accomplice, or, at least, without suspecting his criminal project? Sylvia was a small woman, slender and frail, with a large nose and wide mouth, straight, fair hair, and very short-sighted. She seemed very upset and was rather melodramatic and wept frequently. Her general aspect was not very attractive. Each time Trotsky's name was mentioned in her presence she started to sob, crying out all sorts of imprecations concerning Jacson-Mornard and demanding that he should be killed. If she were really innocent, then her great personal chagrin and her intense bitterness were explained.

The statement which she made regarding the manner in which she met Jacson-Mornard agreed entirely with his. It occurred in Paris in July, 1938. He was introduced to her by one of her friends, also an American, Ruby Weill, with

whom she had made the trip from New York to Paris.¹ They soon became engaged. In August, Jacson invited her to accompany him to Brussels. Although he assured her that his mother lived there, he did not present them to each other. On their return to Paris in September, they became lovers.

Sylvia had been a member of the Trotskyist group in the United States for a long time. Jacson told her that he had no political opinions; when he heard her speak about Marxist theories and Trotskyism, he seemed to be very interested. When she returned to New York in 1939, they continued to write to each other until the month of September, when he unexpectedly arrived there. He had explained to her that he had obtained a false passport, as that was the only way in which he could get a *visa*. They lived together for a month in New York. At the end of this period he told her that he had to go to Mexico, where his employer, Peter Lubeck, was waiting for him, and that he had promised him a salary of 50 dollars a week. He told his fiancée that this Lubeck was the manager of a large firm of British importers. She had the impression that her lover was working, even though, on his arrival in New York, he had given her 3,000 dollars to

¹ In his book entitled *This is My Confession*, Louis Budenz, a well-known Communist, for many years an ex-director of the *Daily Worker*, chief organ of the Communist Party in the United States, reveals that a certain "Miss J.," his secretary at the time and a convinced Stalinist, received the order to tighten her friendship with the militant Trotskyist Sylvia Agelof, whom she was to accompany to Paris with the sole object of putting her in touch with Jacson, whom the G.P.U. had ordered to get introduced into Trotsky's house so as to assassinate him. "Miss J." is, in reality, Ruby Weill. Budenz, who knows much more than he says, wishes to spare his ex-secretary and affirms that she only understood later the role which she had been made to play. We shall return later to the "revelations" of Budenz.

keep for him, which he said he had received from his mother.

Sylvia followed Jacson to the Mexican capital. In January, 1940, Jacson told her that his employer's offices were No. 820 in the building called Edificio Ermita, and even gave her a telephone number. When, some time later, she needed to telephone him, she discovered that this number did not correspond with the address in question. She mentioned this to her sister Gilda, who happened to be in Mexico at the time, and Gilda went to look for him at the Edificio Ermita. She found out that there was no No. 820 in this building. Sylvia had the suspicion that perhaps Jacson was working for the Intelligence Service. She spoke to Marguerite Rosmer about it, who reassured her by promising to make enquiries into Jacson's real work.

At the end of March, on the eve of her return to New York, she went with him to take leave of the Trotskys. This was the first time the future assassin entered the house. Before leaving Mexico, she made him promise that he would not go alone to see Trotsky, for she was afraid that the fact of his having a false passport might cause trouble. Jacson-Mornard promised her, but some time afterwards she received a letter in which he told her that he had been obliged to break his promise because he had had to accompany Alfred Rosmer, who was ill, to the doctor's.

"To what address were your letters to Jacson sent?"

"To Wells Fargo & Co. I also received mine there when I was in Mexico. One day my sister wrote to me from New York saying that there were two important Stalinist agents in Mexico City: B. Helman and Stachel.¹ Jacson, who gave

¹ In the book quoted above, Louis Budenz also speaks of Jack Stachel. It was he who introduced Budenz first to a certain "Richards" and later to a "Robert," who had been instructed to organise Trotsky's murder. Jacson-Mornard was the man who was to carry out their plans.

the impression of not having read the letter or of being interested in its contents, asked who were these two agents. I lost no time in communicating these names to Harold Robins."

"What is your personal opinion about the attack on Trotsky?"

"What can it be? I am sure now that I served as the instrument by which Jacson got in touch with Trotsky so as to kill him. I can't offer any proof of what I say, but that is what I feel. There is no doubt that Jacson is a Stalinist and that behind him are other Stalinists whom I do not know. Stalin is the person who has the greatest reason to get rid of Trotsky. And it is I who have served as his tool."

I drew two immediate conclusions from this statement. Jacson-Mornard had told Sylvia that his offices were in the Edificio Ermita. Now, we had discovered that David Alfaro Siqueiros, the organiser of the attack of May 24th, also had his offices there. It could not be a simple coincidence. Undoubtedly, Siqueiros and Jacson knew each other and were working together. Perhaps under the orders of Helman and Stachel, the two Stalinist agents who had arrived in Mexico City from the United States? Was the famous "French Jew" one of these two? In any case, everything seemed to indicate that the G.P.U. had transformed the Edificio Ermita into an operational centre. In addition, Robert Sheldon Harte had also received his correspondence "Care of Wells Fargo & Co." Another coincidence? There were decidedly too many of them.

In the evidence which Sylvia Agelof gave shortly afterwards before the magistrate, she added some details of interest. She did not know how Jacson-Mornard obtained his money, but was positive that he always had plenty and denied himself nothing. She could not swear that this money came from the G.P.U., but she was convinced that such was the case.

Only an agent of the G.P.U. could have prepared and committed the crime as her ex-lover had done.

"Was it Jacson-Mornard who asked you to come to Mexico?" asked the magistrate.

"Yes," she replied. "He told me that he had to go to Mexico to work and that I must join him there shortly afterwards. Now I understand what his work was, and why he wanted me to come with him to Mexico. Through me, he wanted to get in touch with Trotsky, so that he could murder him."

"While you were living with him in New York, did you ever see the ice-axe which he used to commit the crime?"

"He didn't have it in New York, or, at least I never saw it. It was in Mexico that I saw it for the first time. He told me that he was very keen on mountaineering and that he had used this ice-axe when climbing the Pic d'Orizaba and the Popo in Mexico. I have never seen him with any fire-arms—even on the day of the crime."

"And Jacson has never spoken to you about his criminal projects? You have never suspected anything?"

"Nothing. On the contrary, he assured me that he was a great admirer and friend of Trotsky. On the day of the murder he hardly swallowed a mouthful of food. He seemed anxious and preoccupied. He wanted to leave before the end of the meal on the pretext that he had some urgent business to settle with the American Consul and the Bank. He left me at the Hotel Montejo, promising to come and fetch me about five o'clock to go to say goodbye to the Trotskys. He was quite alone in committing the crime."

It was important to bring the two lovers face to face. According to Jacson-Mornard, one of the reasons for his disillusionment concerning Trotsky had been the attempt of the latter to separate him from Sylvia, the only being in the world who meant anything to him. According to Sylvia,

her lover had used her to get in touch with Trotsky and murder him. And also on the subject of the ice-axe: Jacson-Mornard professed to have brought it from Europe; Sylvia had not seen it either in Paris or New York. . . . Then, for the purpose of the crime, either he had bought it or it had been procured for him in Mexico. The meeting would help to clear up these points and other very important ones in addition.

It took place towards midnight. I gave the order for Sylvia's brother, who had come from New York, to be sent away to look after her sister, and told Sylvia that she was to expect a friend, without telling her who it was. I wanted to see the effect caused by surprise of suddenly finding themselves face to face. I told Jacson-Mornard that he was to go to a consulting-room to have his bruised eye examined. He was wearing a large pad of cotton-wool and a bandage. Because of his general state of weakness, two police officers supported him under the armpits.

When we opened the room occupied by Sylvia she was lying on her bed, in the throes of a nervous crisis, just as though she had guessed what was going to happen! I made the murderer enter while Sylvia, who was sobbing, had covered her eyes with her hands. As soon as he saw her in this state, Jacson tried to free himself from the two officers and started to cry: "Why have you brought me here? What have you done, Colonel? What have you done? Take me out! Take me out!"

I said to him: "If you love Sylvia as you pretend, go to her, speak to her, console her."

At this moment Sylvia lifted her head and, looking at her ex-lover, cried: "Take this murderer away from me. Kill him! He has murdered Trotsky. Kill him! Kill him!"

However sad and dramatic this meeting should prove, I wanted to see it through to the end. Addressing Sylvia, I

said: "Jacson states that you are his only reason for living, and that it was for you, who were the victim of Trotsky's intrigues, that he killed him."

"All lies," cried Sylvia. "He's a hypocrite, an assassin!"

"You should not say that, for you do not know the circumstances of the murder," I replied. "Jacson says that he was disillusioned about Trotsky after having been one of his fanatical admirers, and that Trotsky wanted to destroy your joint happiness with his intrigues."

"But what is all this rubbish?" she angrily exclaimed. "He didn't know Trotsky. It was through me that he met him. Trotsky honestly thought that he was an admirer of his doctrines, a supporter."

And, looking at him with an air of defiance: "Dare to say that it isn't true! Don't lie, traitor! Tell the truth, even if it costs you your life."

Jacson-Mornard gave way to great despair. Turning towards me, he never stopped repeating: "But Colonel, Colonel, what have you done?"

Sylvia, sitting up, attacked her lover: "You've told nothing but lies! You are an agent of the G.P.U. They sent you a long time ago to assassinate Trotsky on Stalin's orders. You learned that my sister was working with Trotsky and that I was a friend of his wife's. That is why you pretended to be in love with me and why you have deceived me. Your only object was to kill him and to use me as your tool for it."

I went on: "Jacson also told me that Trotsky wanted to send him to Russia, via Shanghai, to carry out a secret mission. He was going to send him by the China Clipper."

"Nothing but lies, lies!"

"He also stated that he bought the ice-axe with which he killed Trotsky in Switzerland."

"That's not true either! I've been with him all over

everywhere. I know everything which belongs to him. Let him stop pretending! He bought the ice-axe here to kill Trotsky with."

"He says that he had it in New York."

"It's a shameless lie!"

Addressing Jacson-Mornard, I asked him: "What have you to reply to that?"

The murderer kept silent. He was crushed. He dared not look at his lover, and was obviously thinking only of how to put an end to this interview.

Again addressing Sylvia, I continued: "Jacson has also declared that he received 5,000 dollars from his mother in Brussels with which to come to America, and that he gave 3,000 of them to you."

She replied that, in fact, he had given her 3,000 dollars to keep for him. But, once more turning to him, she said: "You deceived me, as you are trying to deceive everybody. This money did not come from your family, but from the G.P.U., and it was payment in anticipation for the assassination of Trotsky. They paid you, you blackguard, to murder him!"

"Listen to what your friend is saying," I said to Jacson-Mornard. "She is the principal witness for the prosecution against you. What have you to reply?"

"Nothing! Nothing! Take me out of here, Colonel, I beg you!"

"What do you think of him?" I asked Sylvia.

She again started to pour out a torrent of abuse on him, to repeat the accusations she had already made against him.

"But Jacson-Mornard says he belongs to the Fourth International."

"It's a lie! He knows no one in the Fourth International. No one! He pretended to be one of Trotsky's admirers, but that was all part of his plan to betray him!"

"One last word: during all the time that you were together, what opinion did you have of him? Do you believe that the love which he says he has for you is sincere?"

"No! This man is a traitor in love, in friendship, in everything! Now I understand that I was the unsuspecting tool of a scoundrel."

And she tried to spit in his face. Whilst we were taking him away, Sylvia never stopped repeating: "You are a blackguard! Blackguard! Blackguard!"

During the whole of this scene, a very curious thing was occurring. Jacson-Mornard had declared that his mother tongue was French, and that he knew English fairly well, but very little Spanish. And he had always refused to use this language. But on this occasion his gifts as an actor failed him. And I realised that he knew Spanish perfectly!

XI

Jacson-Mornard has Lied

I SUBMITTED Jacson-Mornard to a new interrogation during the night of August 23rd-24th, hardly according him any respite. It was clear to me that the whole of his previous declaration had been nothing but a tissue of lies. I had to make him contradict himself. It was with that object that I undertook the new interrogation.

I adopted a severe, grave tone, almost threatening at times, and said to him:

"Listen, Jacson: this is the last chance I shall give you to tell me the truth, and it will be entirely in your own interest to do so. Trotsky's murder has produced such a sensation throughout the whole world that it occupied the front pages of the newspapers, putting even the news of the war into the background. The attention of the whole world is fixed on the Mexican authorities, in the hope that they will be able to throw some light on the affair. Out of self-respect which you will understand, and for the sake of justice and the prestige of my country, we have decided to have recourse to any means whatsoever in order to discover the truth. You alone are withholding this truth, and we are resolved to draw it from you at any price, for otherwise the prestige of Mexico will be gravely compromised. Up to the present we have treated you with every consideration. It will be very unpleasant for us to have to change our methods."

The assassin listened to me attentively, without moving his good eye from my lips. He realised that there was a hard

fight ahead of him and he seemed to be concentrating his attention and preparing himself to face it.

I went on: "You've told us all sorts of cock-and-bull stories. Nothing you've told us up to the moment holds water. We cannot accept, and public opinion will not accept, that in cold blood you took the decision to kill a man who had caused you no personal injury, because you were disappointed in him as a political leader. In addition, you have made seriously contradictory statements. First you said that Trotsky ruined your life because he made you come from France under a false name; then, in the letter which was found on you, you assert that the reason for the crime which you committed was the disillusion you felt on getting to know Trotsky personally. There is an obvious contradiction there. Nobody in the world ever committed such an act for such a motive. A man kills for other reasons, not the reasons you give. Your argument is childish, and ordinary common sense refutes it. I give you one last opportunity to tell me the truth. Whose was the brain which directed your arm? Who sent you here and who helped you? Who were the men, in fact, who supplied you with the means necessary to commit the crime?"

It was clear that my words had not succeeded in intimidating him. Calmly resolute, he replied: "I have understood you perfectly. You are looking for an answer which I am not in a position to supply, for I do not know it. I know that I have committed an extremely serious offence, and that I shall have to suffer the consequences, but even if you cut me into little pieces, I cannot say any more."

"Repeat the motive which made you commit the crime."

He repeated the statement already mentioned. According to him, he had been actuated purely by moral principles, for Trotsky had placed him in a moral impasse. His actual words were:

"This man made me come to Mexico with a false passport because he wanted to make me into a terrorist at his service. In an underhand, deceitful manner he brought me here and confronted me with the alternatives of following the road which he had mapped out and of returning to face the execution squad in my own country. My life was ruined the day I agreed to come to Mexico. I realised it when it was too late."

"Do you think that world opinion will applaud your act?"

"Obviously not! I only want them to understand my indignation at finding myself treated like dirt."

"But hadn't you enough presence of mind to leave?"

"Not at all! For a whole week I didn't seem to exist. I was obsessed by one idea, so strong that it prevented me even from speaking to Sylvia. I was literally ill. She said to me: 'It's not a man I'm speaking to, but a wall.'"

"You left the country shortly after the first attempt because you were afraid that you would be arrested?"

"No."

"And in New York you got in touch with the agents of the G.P.U. so that they could give you all the necessary instructions for the preparation of the new attack."

"But, sir, but sir, I went to New York to see Sylvia because I could not live without seeing her."

"After having had long discussions during two or three weeks, you returned to Mexico and got in touch with the G.P.U. agents here. And you did not go to see the Trotskys. You told them afterwards that it was because you were ill."

"I was really ill. I had dysentery."

"What doctor did you see about it?"

"I don't usually need a doctor. I've suffered from liver trouble since I was six and I know how to treat it. Besides, each doctor prescribes a different treatment."

"Your reasons are not very convincing. You are not

telling the truth," I said angrily. However, I continued: "How much did you pay for the automatic pistol?"

"A hundred and sixty or a hundred and seventy pesos, I don't remember exactly. In addition, I gave Bartolo Perez or Paris a typewriter."

"What make?"

"Remington."

"How much did you pay for it?"

"I don't remember exactly whether it was a hundred and forty or a hundred and fifty pesos."

"How did you know that this Bartolo sold firearms?"

"I didn't know that he sold firearms. He's one of these fellows you see everywhere, in Paris, in Constantinople, throughout the whole world. I cannot be sure, either, that Bartolo Perez or Paris is his real name."

"And you bought the dagger?"

"In the Lagunilla."

"Could you take me to the place where you bought it?"

"Approximately, yes."

"When did you buy it?"

"I don't remember exactly."

"When did you go to New York?"

"At the beginning of June."

"When the G.P.U. realised that the first attempt had failed, they sent for you to go to New York to prepare a new attack?"

He admitted that it was logical that I should arrive at this conclusion, but he denied that it was true.

"When did you fix the date to kill Trotsky?"

"There wasn't any date fixed."

"When did you get the idea of killing him?"

"After he had told me of his plans and the manner in which he intended to carry them out."

"When exactly?"

"Fourteen or fifteen days beforehand."

He repeated what he had said previously concerning the voyage which Trotsky had wanted him to make to Russia through Manchuria. He said: "I was to join his supporters in the U.S.S.R. with the object of working for the demoralisation of the Army and to sabotage war factories and, if it was possible, to attack the leaders. He gave me the broad outlines of his plan. He never gave me any details. I came away from the discussion as though the house were falling on top of me."

"And that is why you thought of murdering him?"

"The idea didn't occur to me exactly at that moment. I was a whole week thinking about the situation, and it was then that the idea of murder came to me."

"At what moment exactly?"

"Seven or eight days before."

A few minutes before he had told me that it was fourteen or fifteen days before. Now it was no more than seven or eight.

"Tell me now how you decided to commit the crime."

"I never had any definite plan. My idea was to finish him off and then to commit suicide afterwards."

"Why didn't you do so?"

"Because I didn't have a chance."

"How! You didn't have a chance?"

"I had thought that he would die immediately of the blow I intended to give him."

"How had you decided to deliver the blow?"

"On the head, or I don't know how. I closed my eyes."

"When you had the idea of killing him, why did you decide to use the axe and not the revolver?"

"Because I know how to use it."

"Had you foreseen the possibility of leaving the house?"

"I might or might not have been able to leave the house."

If I had managed to do so, I intended to commit suicide where I told you."

"You decided not to use the revolver, so as to avoid making any noise and so try to escape."

"That is why! That is why I did not want to use the revolver, so as not to make any noise. I had no intention of escaping, however."

"Were you not afraid that the secretaries would kill you?"

"That is what I wanted. Forty, fifty thousand times I asked them to kill me."

In his new statement he declared that Bartolo Perez or Paris went with him to the Wood of Chapultepec to write the letter. Thus the role played by Bartolo had not consisted only in keeping the typewriter and in receiving it as a present after having supplied him with a revolver. I wanted to make him give me definite details on this point and asked:

"You separated then, you and Bartolo?"

"Yes, when I had finished the letter, he left and I gave him the typewriter to keep for me."

How could he have written such a letter in the presence of a person whom he had only just got to know and whose job was simply to get a revolver for him? Did not the present declaration indicate that Bartolo knew all about the whole affair? This must be the G.P.U. agent who had prepared the details of the attack with him. But what was his real identity? And where was he now? On this point it was impossible to get a word out of the murderer. It was his secret.

"When did you buy the typewriter?"

"After Sylvia had left for New York."

"Then Sylvia had never seen it?"

"No."

"Listen, Mornard: one day or another Bartolo will fall into the hands of the police and we shall bring you face to face."

"What do you want me to confess?"

"It wasn't you who wrote that letter. It was written for you."

"For me?"

"Why don't you admit it? Who wrote the letter?"

"I, sir. It was I who wrote it."

He then contradicted himself concerning the raincoat. He assured me that he had bought it solely to protect himself from the rain. But the fact that he had hidden the axe and dagger inside it showed that he had really bought it to use when committing the murder, for, as will be remembered, he had used it only twice, the second time on the day of the crime. He contradicted himself also regarding the conversation he had had with Natalie Sedova a few minutes before the crime. In reply to a few ticklish questions, he made a series of vague replies: "I don't remember," "I don't know," "I have no reply to make." I was moved to remark: "You haven't a very good memory. Is that why you have forgotten the people in the G.P.U.?"

I then asked him: "How long was it since you had been to Trotsky's house?"

"I went on the Saturday."

"And what did you do on Saturday, if you had already thought of killing Trotsky?"

"I can't remember now. I think I went to see Otto or one of the other secretaries."

He then repeated to me all the details of the murder. He admitted that he had given Trotsky the article dealing with the differences between the factions in the United States so as to distract his attention, and so that he would not be suspicious. I asked him: "Have you never thought that Trotsky was an old man, unable to defend himself, and that in attacking him you showed great cowardice?"

"I didn't think of anything," he said.

"When you delivered the blow, what did he do?"

"He jumped up as though he had gone mad, and started to scream, also as though he had gone mad. A scream that I shall remember all my life."

I have tried to give as complete a résumé as possible of this interrogation, the report of which contains twenty-two typewritten pages. In spite of my threats, he stuck to the main outlines of the theory advanced in his letter and in his first statement. His brain worked with great agility. It was evident that he had prepared his defence very carefully. Nevertheless, I made him contradict himself several times, without counting the numerous "I don't know's" and "I can't remember's"—the easy recourse of all delinquents when they are in a tight corner.

The chief contradiction was that concerning his relations with Trotsky. He declared first of all that he was sent from Paris to Mexico by a Committee Member of the Fourth International so as to get in touch with Trotsky. He then accused the latter of having made him come with a false passport and of having thus ruined his life. It was utterly unbelievable that Trotsky had tried to separate him from Sylvia, the real Trotskyist, who had been responsible for their meeting each other.

Another contradiction, already shown above, was that concerning the role played by the phantasmagorical and mysterious Bartolo Perez or Paris. It was a very common or popular name, of the sort usually chosen by someone who wishes to hide his real one. Jacson-Mornard himself admitted that it might easily be false. I knew very well, if he existed, that it would be more than difficult to discover the person who was hiding under this name. It was evident, in any case, that this Bartolo had played a part far more important than the murderer pretended.

Another extremely strange and significant story was the

tale of the typewriter. No one had ever seen it. It was highly improbable that he had bought it with the sole intention of writing this letter, which was found on him. Why had he not taken it into his hotel room? The excuse he gave, that he did not know what explanation to give Sylvia, was childish. Why should she have been surprised that a journalist and a business man, with plenty of money, should buy a typewriter? To judge by the type, it was a machine with a French keyboard. It had not been bought at the Mount of Piety, as the assassin had suggested. And why pretend that it had been procured for him by Bartolo, a person whom according to his own declarations, he had not known before, and that afterwards he had made him a present of it?

The solution was obvious: this typewriter had never existed, or, in any case, had not existed in Mexico. On the contrary, everything showed that the letter had been written in New York, during the trip that Jacson-Mornard had made there a few days after the failure of the attack of May 24th. Probably the "French Jew," who had directed the first attack and who had left Mexico shortly after he noticed that the police were on his track, had been the one to order him to make the journey. Jacson-Mornard was the last reserve, and they had decided to use him. It was logical and natural. On the other hand, the theory which the murderer tried to uphold was highly improbable from all angles, lacking logic and common sense.

On August 30th, about midday, Jacson was transferred, on the order of the magistrate, in an ambulance to Trotsky's house, so that the crime could be reconstructed. It was an indispensable formality. The assassin was surrounded by four officers under Galindo's orders. In the house itself were numerous police officers in uniform; all were there to protect the life of the murderer against the legitimate anger

of Trotsky's ex-secretaries. As a measure of precaution, we had completely disarmed the latter, as well as the journalists and photographers. The only one who offered any resistance was Robins. Eleven revolvers, a Thompson and a rifle were collected in the house and were locked in a room guarded by a police officer.

At the entrance, in the courtyard, was a marble plate with the following inscription in English:

TO THE MEMORY OF
ROBERT SHELDON HARTE (1915-1940),
ASSASSINATED BY STALIN.

The house had undergone new changes which had rendered it even more impregnable. The windows were reinforced, the doors were armour-plated and there were embrasures on all sides. The G.P.U. must have smiled triumphantly at all these precautions.

We proceeded first of all to a minute examination of the register, in which were inscribed the arrivals and departures of visitors; the day, week, month, year, the exact time of the arrival and departure, as well as the initials of the person on guard. There was only one entry for Sylvia Agelof-Maslow, March 19th, at 8.35 p.m. Jacson-Mornard had paid twelve visits to the house, the first on May 28th, and the last on August 20th, at 4.20 p.m. exactly. There was one on June 12th, from 10.30 a.m. to 10.40 a.m. This was the day he left for New York, when Cooper had lunched with him and accompanied him to the airport. The next visit was on July 29th. Three weeks had elapsed since his return from New York, doubtless with exact instructions. Generally, he remained only a few minutes. The longest visit was that of July 29th: he arrived at 2.40 p.m. and left at 3.50 p.m.—that is to say, he remained an hour and ten minutes that day. The next longest visit was that on August 8th, twelve days

before the crime: he came at 5.55 p.m. and left at 6.40 p.m.—that is, he remained just three-quarters of an hour. In all, during the eleven visits which he had made—without counting that on the day of the crime—he had stayed four hours and twenty minutes.

The extraordinary importance of this information will be readily understood. How was it possible that in so short a time Trotsky had been able to entrust to Jacson-Mornard a mission so delicate and so complicated as this one, which consisted in going to Russia via Shanghai and Manchukuo in order to undertake the organisation of the demoralisation of the Red Army, the sabotage of war industries and the assassination of the Soviet leaders? Apart from the unbelievable character of this mission, it would seem materially impossible.

We were able to verify, besides, that only on two or three of these visits had Jacson-Mornard had the opportunity of seeing Trotsky. And even that had been due to the following circumstances: Jacson came to see the Frenchman, Alfred Rosmer, who in the beginning received him at the door without asking him in. One day, Nathalie Sedova, who was just going out, asked him to come in to avoid standing talking in the street. One day when Jacson was visiting Rosmer, the latter by chance presented him to Trotsky.

The murderer was certainly unaware—and the G.P.U. itself?—of the existence of this register, where every visit made to the Trotsky household was carefully noted. It is no less certain that the information which it contained completely upset the theory advanced by the assassin.

The magistrate then broke the seals placed on the door of the study where the murder had been committed. Everything was as it had been left after the drama had taken place. On the table were Trotsky's glasses which he used for distance. To the right was another pair with tortoiseshell rims,

with the left glass broken. This was the pair he had worn when he had received the fatal blow. On a chair beside the divan was the book which Trotsky had been reading, *Hitler Speaks*, by Hermann Rauschning. We also found in the study his two revolvers, each containing six bullets.

The Licentiate, Raoul Carranca Trujillo, gave the order for the assassin to be brought in. He entered with his shoulders bent, his head drooping on his chest, his feet trailing. He wore a grey suit, and a stray lock of hair had escaped from the bandages round his head. He trembled continuously, cleverly exaggerating the weakness of his condition. His appearance was simply lamentable. As soon as he saw Hansen, who looked fixedly at him with an expression of intense hatred, he started to tremble and collapsed on to a chair. When he realised that he was treading on dried blood, he was shaken by a nervous convulsion, and buried his head on his arms, leaning on Trotsky's work table.

When the moment for the reconstruction of the crime arrived, Major Galindo took the place of the victim. The murderer, who was standing at his side, towards the left and near to the window giving on to the garden, murmured: "When I committed the crime, he was reading my article. He had just finished the first page, and was beginning the second. I took a step backwards, turned round and took the ice-axe out of my raincoat, which I had placed on the table behind him, gripped the axe in my hands and hit him on the head, like this. . . ."

And, taking a rolled-up newspaper in his hands, he went through the motions of delivering a blow on the head of Major Galindo.

He added, in a feeble voice: "Someone arrived; I think it was Robins. I could see nothing. I was rooted to the spot.

Someone hit me, and I fell to the ground unconscious. That is all."

And so finished the reconstruction of the crime.

In the afternoon of the same day, with the magistrate's authorisation, Jacson-Mornard was submitted to a double cross-examination; first, by the special representative of the Public Prosecutor, the Licentiate Francisco Cabeza de Vaca, and, secondly, by Albert Goldman, the lawyer representing Nathalie Sedova and the Trotskyist organisation. The second was the more important, in spite of the fact that Goldman was forced to limit his questions exclusively to the preparation and carrying out of the murder.

"What business had you on the 20th of this month with the American Consul?" demanded the representative of the Public Prosecutor.

"None," replied the murderer.

"Why did you say you had to Sylvia?"

"I lied so that she would not know the truth. I wanted to go to see Bartolo so that he could give me the revolver with which to commit suicide."

"Do you know Stachel or Bittleman?"

"I have never heard of them."

"Did you know that they were important Stalinist agents?"

"No; I didn't."

"When you were in Paris, did you know any Spanish?"

"The little that I know, I learned here."

"A few days before the crime, on August 17th, you went to see Trotsky to show him the draft of an article, did you not?"

"Quite. And he made a few corrections. We were alone in the study."

"Tell me the truth. Why didn't you kill him then? The

study had the same furniture and was arranged in the same manner, wasn't it?"

"Quite. Everything was the same; it was the same setting; but I had no weapon on me that day."

"On the day of the crime, exactly the same thing happened as on your previous visit on the Saturday. The same pretext of the article which Trotsky was to read, the same setting. Trotsky sitting at his desk to read the article, and you at his side, on his left, and entirely alone. That is how it was, isn't it? All that happened the first time was just a try-out?"

"I will accept that the second time was, so to speak, a repetition of the first, but I am not going to admit that there was any premeditation whatever in the act which I committed that day."

This reply indicated that the murderer was cleverly beginning to prepare his defence. Nevertheless, he could not harbour many illusions; all his previous statements, duly signed, and above all his letter, clearly proved premeditation.

I will now give as complete a résumé as possible of the long and interesting cross-examination to which the Trotskyist lawyer, Albert Goldman, submitted the murderer.

When he was asked what he had done with his passport and his personal papers, he said: "I have already replied that I burned all my papers on the way to visit Trotsky on the afternoon of the 20th. I saved only the letter which the police found on me. Yes, I am telling the truth, and my passport and my personal papers would have verified my statement in all its details."

"Then why did you destroy them?"

"I wanted to get rid of all that stuff, for I had no reason to keep it."

"When, approximately, did you see the member of the

Fourth International who asked you to go to Mexico to see Trotsky?"

"At the end of July or the beginning of August, 1939."

"Who introduced you to him?"

"I think it was two Greek members of the Fourth International."

"Was he introduced by name?"

"No."

"Then how was he introduced?"

"Simply as a member of the Fourth International."

"Were you a member of the French section of the Fourth International?"

"No. Only a sympathiser."

"Could you give us some idea of the nationality of this member?"

"I think he was Rumanian, or one of the Balkan countries."

"How many times did you see him?"

"Fifteen or twenty times."

"When was the last time?"

"I don't remember."

To almost all the other questions put to him regarding his conversations with this member of the Fourth International, he invariably replied: "I don't remember."

"What sum of money did you receive from this committee member?"

"Two hundred dollars."

"In French or American currency?"

"I don't remember."

"Did you ask him if 200 dollars was enough to cover all the expenses of a journey as far as Mexico?"

"No; I didn't ask him."

"Did you know how much the journey as far as Mexico would cost?"

"No."

"You have stated that this member of the Fourth International gave you instructions to wait at Mexico City and not to see Trotsky immediately?"

"Yes."

"He also told you to look for some time as though you had business in Mexico, did he not?"

"Yes."

"And you did so from September, 1939, to the end of May, 1940?"

"Yes."

"And you didn't notice that these 200 dollars were not sufficient?"

"Money is of secondary importance to me."

"Did you receive a letter of recommendation for Trotsky from this pretended member of the Fourth International?"

"No."

"How did you hope to see Trotsky without a letter of recommendation and to convince him that you were a person to be trusted?"

"That wasn't my affair, but that of the person who sent me."

"What work did you hope to do with Trotsky?"

"Translating or secretarial work."

"Did you not think it strange to be sent without a letter of recommendation?"

"No."

"What did you do between your arrival in the United States and your first interview with Trotsky?"

"Nothing."

"You weren't engaged in any business?"

"No."

"Did you not go to see several business people?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Those were my instructions."

"Do you know any of Trotsky's secretaries?"

"Yes."

"Did you ask them whether they had received the same instructions to wait before seeing Trotsky?"

"No."

There then followed questioning on the passport which the murderer said he had received in Paris and which he had destroyed. He affirmed that the only thing he remembered about this passport was the name it bore—Frank Jacson.

"You knew that it was a false passport, did you not?"

"Yes."

"And you pretend that you never learned what it contained so as to be familiar with it?"

"I never had the slightest interest in it."

"Were you not afraid of being questioned at the frontier?"

"No."

"You want us to believe that you received a false passport in Europe and that you never bothered to find out what it said?"

"I don't care what you believe."

When the lawyer began to question him regarding his interviews with Trotsky, he became extremely careful. It was obviously the most tricky part for him. It is worth while giving here the chief questions and replies.

"When did you see Trotsky for the first time?"

"I don't remember."

"Was it the day when you went to Trotsky's house to drive the Rosmers to Vera Cruz?"

"I don't remember."

"Was it you who offered to drive the Rosmers to Vera Cruz or they who asked you?"

"I don't remember."

"Did you know Trotsky before coming to see the Rosmers?"

"I don't remember."

"Do you remember at what period you saw Trotsky for the first time?"

"No."

"Was it before or after the attack of May 24th?"

"After, towards the end of May."

"Who introduced you to Trotsky?"

"Alfred Rosmer."

"Did you ever hold any conversation with Trotsky in the presence of Rosmer?"

"I don't remember."

"Do you remember when you had your second conversation with Trotsky?"

"No."

"How much time was there between the first and second conversations?"

"I don't remember."

"What was the subject of the second conversation?"

"I don't remember."

To all the other questions which were put to him regarding his conversations with Trotsky, the dates, circumstances and the persons who were present, he invariably replied: "I don't remember."

"During which of these conversations were you disillusioned?"

"I don't remember."

"Did you tell anyone else about being disillusioned?"

"I don't remember."

"Did you not speak to Sylvia, your most intimate friend, about your disillusion?"

"I don't know."

"Could you tell us the results of one of these conversations?"

"I only remember that the result was my being disillusioned regarding Trotsky."

To other questions he replied what he had already said in his letter, that Trotsky had wanted to send him to Russia to carry out acts of sabotage.

"Was it during this conversation with Trotsky that he proposed the assassination of Stalin to you?"

"Trotsky did not exactly propose the assassination of Stalin to me."

"Then what exactly did Trotsky propose to you?"

"I don't remember."

"And your disillusion was the result of the proposition that he made that you should commit acts of sabotage?"

"Yes."

"Did Trotsky say what acts of sabotage you were to commit in Russia?"

"I have already replied to that question in my previous statement."

"Can you not reply again?"

"No."

"Will you reply 'Yes' or 'No' to the question whether Trotsky proposed that you should assassinate Stalin?"

"I have already replied to all these questions in my previous declarations."

"How many conversations did you have with Trotsky after he proposed that you should commit these acts of sabotage in Russia?"

"I don't remember."

"When were you to go to Russia to carry out this sabotage?"

"I don't know."

"What were you to do as soon as you arrived in Russia?"

"I don't know. I have already explained in detail the propositions which Trotsky made to me, and it is useless to repeat them."

"Will you reply to the questions which I put to you if I prove that you have not already replied to them?"

"I shan't reply, because you want to make me contradict myself."

Here the magistrate intervened:

"If you are telling the truth, you cannot be afraid of contradicting yourself."

"If I do not give any details it is not because I am afraid of contradicting myself, but because Trotsky did not give me any. All I know was the result of these conversations. Trotsky asked me to go to Russia to carry out acts of sabotage. I can supply no details because Trotsky did not give me any."

All this questioning proved up to the hilt that the murderer was lying. No one could doubt it. But what was the truth which he was so carefully hiding?

XII

Jacson-Mornard, Torkof, or . . . ?

ON the morning of August 31st, at my request, Mr. W. Loridan, Belgian *Chargé d'Affaires* in Mexico, and his assistant, Mr. Vasthaliti, made an unexpected visit to Jacson-Mornard. The results of this interview are contained in the following document, dated September 2nd, which was handed to me by these diplomats:

"In the course of the interview I had on Saturday, August 31st, with the accused, Jacson-Mornard, I came to the conclusion that he is not of Belgian nationality, and does not know Belgium, and that all the declarations made by him on this subject are false.

"(1) The prisoner pretended to be the son of a Belgian minister, and to have been born at the Belgian Legation at Tehran. Now there has never been a Belgian diplomat of the name of Mornard, and the representative of Belgium in Persia from 1904 to 1908 was Mr. Marc t'Serstevens, who was replaced in 1908 by Mr. Havernith.

"When I asked Jacson what other posts his father had occupied, he replied that he did not know, which is rather strange on the part of the son of a diplomat.

"(2) The prisoner also declared that he did not know what posts were occupied by his brother, who, he states, is the 'Secretary to the Consul' (a title which does not exist in Belgium), but Jacson believes that his brother is now at Brussels, unattached, and not at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"(3) The assassin states that he studied at the University

of Brussels and at the Faculty of Science. I told him that I also had studied at this University, and asked him if he remembered the names of some of the professors. He could not remember any of them.

“(4) The accused pretends to have studied at the Military School at Dixmude (a small town in Flanders, where no military school exists). In Belgium, as in every country in the world, discipline is very strict in military schools, and, in spite of that, Jacson-Mornard pretends to have obtained permission to attend the lectures at the University of Brussels. It should also be noted that Dixmude is no less than seventy-eight miles from Brussels.

“(5) Jacson-Mornard pretends to have studied at the Jesuit College, St. Ignatius of Loyola of Brussels (this college does not exist) situated, according to him, on the Waterloo Embankment, near to the wood. Now, the colleges of the Jesuits at Brussels are situated a long way from there.

“(6) The prisoner states that his mother lived for a long time at No. 1 Havre Embankment. Havre Embankment does not exist at Brussels, but there is a Wavre Embankment. No. 1 of this embankment is occupied by a large stores, well-known to the natives of Brussels. The accused began by saying that his mother did not live in the stores, but, doubtless seeing that I was somewhat sceptical, added: ‘There is a stores below, but my mother lived above it.’

“(7) A man who has taken a course at a military school in Belgium and who pretends to have studied at Dixmude (in the Flemish part of the country) must at least have some idea of Flemish. But the prisoner did not understand any of the simple sentences I spoke in this tongue, and, when wishing to reply ‘No’ in any case (*neen*, in Flemish), he replied ‘*Nein*’ in German. Any foreigners who have lived in Belgium, for no matter how short a time, know that ‘No’ is pronounced *Neen* in Flemish.

"The above, as well as some other replies which the assassin made to me and to my colleague, Mr. Vasthaliti, in the course of the interview which we had with him, is sufficient to show that he is not a Belgian, and has no knowledge of Belgium.

"W. LORIDAN."

This precious document arrived to confirm the conclusions drawn from the enquiry: Jacson-Mornard had lied; his statement was false from beginning to end.

I must mention here that from the beginning of the enquiry I had begun to receive mysterious letters from the United States, the obvious aim of which was to turn me aside from the path I had taken. According to these letters, Jacson-Mornard had told the truth: he was one of Trotsky's followers who had been deceived by him. Who was at the back of these letters? The G.P.U. without any doubt. It was in the United States, particularly in New York, that the agents of the G.P.U. were to be found who had organised the attack of May 24th and, very probably, had armed and directed the hand of the assassin. Obviously, this attempt on the part of the writers of the letters did not deter me in the slightest from carrying out my duty.

Things went even further with the Magistrate, the Licentiate Raoul Carranca Trujillo. On September 2nd, he received the following anonymous letter:

"You will pay very dearly for any steps you may take in the trial against Jacques Mornard for the murder of Trotsky, with the object of making him declare he is an agent of the G.P.U., and thereby raising international questions of the greatest importance. Remember that the powerful resources of a perfect organisation have enabled it to work its way into a house which was believed impregnable. Restrict yourself to seeking an ordinary cause, without

trying to give the affair undue importance. Do not forget, Comrade Magistrate, that you can be rewarded or punished according to your attitude. Do not forget, and remember that there are a thousand eyes on you, watching what you do. Greetings, comrade!"

Naturally, such threats could not turn the Mexican authorities from their duty. But they confirmed what we already knew: that behind Jacson-Mornard was the sinister Russian police organisation, the G.P.U.

It was in the next stage of the enquiry that we succeeded in getting nearest to the truth. A great deal of light was shed on the personality of the assassin and on the assassination itself, thanks chiefly to the zealous and efficient work put in by Secret Service Officer No. 63, Rene T. Urquidi. We found out that on April 11th last, Frank Jacson had gone to live in a camp for tourists belonging to a Mr. Shirley.

One morning, accompanied by Urquidi, I went to this camp, situated near to the Hospital of Colonia and to the railway station of that name, which now no longer exists. It was all very respectable, with a North American atmosphere about it. Its large, comfortable apartments were surrounded by green lawns and flowering plants. The obvious luxury of the place clearly indicated the expensiveness of its terms.

We were received by the proprietor himself, Mr. Shirley. The information which he gave us, from the hotel register, showed us that Frank Jacson had declared himself to be of Canadian nationality and that he had been absent for five days, and had returned on April 16th, driving a Buick car with Mexican number-plates, even though he had no driving licence. He remained there until June 13th, on which date he stated that he was returning to "his own country, Canada." (There was obviously an error of date there, for Jacson left on June 12th—for America, not Canada.) Whilst

Jacson was staying at the camp, Mr. Shirley had noticed several interesting details.

Frank Jacson received some visits and numerous telephone calls, particularly from women. One of them had a very pronounced Russian accent. One day two men came to see him, apparently of Mexican nationality. Instead of receiving them immediately, Jacson left his room and went to the garage where he kept his car. He came back some minutes later, during which time the two men in question were waiting. Jacson looked at them for a moment from behind the window. Then he went with them into the garden. They showed him their papers, doubtless to identify themselves. Jacson then returned to his room and came back with a paper which he showed to the visitors. For an hour and a half they talked together in a secretive manner.

Mr. Shirley had noticed that each time Jacson spoke on the telephone or with anyone whatsoever in the office, he placed his back against the wall and never took his eyes off the entrance door. On this occasion he adopted the same attitude, he placed himself in the garden so as to control the entrances, and did not take his eyes off them, as though he were afraid of being spied on or attacked by surprise. All this seemed to show that Jacson felt himself to be constantly watched and was in the power of people who exercised some strange hold over him. Who were they? It was not difficult to guess: the agents of the G.P.U., who formed a network around him.

The day when Jacson departed for New York, he gave Sylvia's address as the one at which he would be staying—50 Livingstone Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y. He left his car, not at the garage but in charge of the person who accompanied him, and who answered to the following description: between thirty-five and forty years of age, tall, dark,

yellowish complexion, with a small trimmed moustache, smartly dressed, native type. This was the person who helped him to carry a trunk and some suitcases into his car.

Jacson kept this trunk and two suitcases in the office, always very carefully locked. They were very heavy, particularly the trunk. It was obvious that they contained neither clothing nor articles in current use. Jacson had said that they contained his engineering instruments. He frequently went to the office to make sure that no one had touched them. We now came to the conclusion that they contained part of the firearms used in the attack of May 24th.

In addition, Jacson had some dealings with the night-watchman at the garage, who belonged to a trade union which was clearly under Communist influence. During the night of May 23rd-24th, they used Jacson's car and, after midnight, took away the trunk and suitcases in it, and brought them back again in the morning. There was another strange coincidence: Jacson, who had deposited the sum of 900 dollars at the hotel office, withdrew 100 dollars on the afternoon of the 23rd, which represented, at the rate of exchange then in force, about 600 pesos. We could therefore draw the following conclusion: Jacson-Mornard had not personally participated in the attack of May 24th¹ but had collaborated in its preparation and had even kept part of the firearms where he was staying, as well as one of the cars used on this occasion. Through the office in the Edificio

¹ Nathalie Sedova and the Trotskyists think that Jacson was the person for whom Sheldon opened the gate of Trotsky's house in the attack of May 24th. It is not impossible, but very improbable, for it was only logical for them to keep him in reserve, without risk of compromising him. In any case, neither Hernandez nor the police, who were guarding the outside of the house, recognised him as one of those who had taken part in the attack.

Erita, he had kept in touch with the chief organisers of the attack: the "French Jew," David Alfaro Siqueiros, and Antonio Pujol.

There was also a very strange circumstance concerning the car belonging to Jacson-Mornard. Shirley said he used it every week-end to leave the capital. He also used it, as the registers showed, on May 27th and 30th and June 4th, 6th, and 12th—this last date being that on which he left for New York. The car was generally brought back from these trips covered in dust and mud, evident proof that he had taken it into the country. In spite of that, the same mileage was always shown: 32·437. An employee at the garage remarked about it one day to Jacson, who replied that he intended to sell the car and did not want to increase the mileage. It was evidently a wise precaution so that the distances the car had covered could never be used as a means of discovering the places he had been to outside the capital. Such a precaution was not normal for an ordinary criminal. It showed quite a technique in organisation.

Another very important discovery was that concerning the ice-axe which the murderer had used. Mr. Shirley had a son who was a very enthusiastic mountaineer. More than once he had discussed this subject with Jacson. Four years previously the younger Shirley had bought an ice-axe for his mountain-climbing excursions. On the day which followed the attack against Trotsky, Shirley, having read in the papers that it had been committed with such a weapon, asked his son where his axe was. It had disappeared. Jacson had stolen it to commit the crime.

But the most important discovery concerned the false passport which Jacson had used to come to Mexico. This passport had been issued on March 22nd, 1937, under the number 31.377, by the Foreign Office at Ottawa (Canada). Its original possessor was born on June 13th, 1905, at

Lovinac, Yugoslavia, and had acquired Canadian nationality in 1929. According to the information furnished by the above department, the passport had been issued to a Yugoslav-Canadian, Tony Babich, who had applied for it on the above date for the purpose of visiting his family in their own country. In reality it was a pretext: Tony Babich went to Spain and joined the International Brigade, which was fighting against Franco under the dictatorial direction of the Communists. As was usual in the said International Brigade, the Communist commissars—in reality the G.P.U.—had confiscated Babich's passport and all his personal papers.¹ The Spanish Republican Government announced shortly afterwards that the volunteer Tony Babich had died in action.

This same passport made its appearance again three years later at Mexico City, but with a different name and the photograph of a different person. It is evident that only the G.P.U. could have made use of it in the manner we have just described. That is the reason why Jacson-Mornard and the G.P.U. found it so necessary to destroy it before the murder. But the Immigration Department of the Mexican Government possessed information thanks to which we have been able to find out the number of the passport, and the place and date of issue. It was thus not difficult for us to find the name of its real owner and all the information concerning him.

¹ The G.P.U. has used numerous passports—and other types of documents—belonging to foreigners killed during the Civil War in Spain. In its book on Russian espionage in Canada, the Royal Commission cites a similar case, that of a Canadian called Ignace Samuel Witczack, to whom a passport was issued at Toronto on May 12th, 1937, and which was taken from him at Albacete, where the Communist Headquarters of the International Brigade were situated. The use to which this document was put is not known.

A month later I was able to obtain further very important information regarding the real identity of Trotsky's assassin. My agent Urquidi, helped by chance, which often comes to the aid of a diligent police officer, got to know a Russian ex-aviator at the barber's. His name was Plufea and he worked for the Mexican Company of Aviation. Plufea told him that the photograph of Jacson-Mornard, which he had seen in the newspapers, was that of one of his old chauffeurs at the time when he was in business. This chauffeur then called himself Salvador Torkof and was of Russian origin, the same as himself. Plufea had discharged him because Torkof had tried, without his knowledge, to pass contraband articles in his car on one of the journeys they made to the United States, an act for which he had been imprisoned.

I asked him to come to my office. He was an elderly man with an agreeable, rather serious air. He had not come spontaneously, doubtless out of fear that he might run into trouble. I promised him police protection if he thought he was likely to be threatened. He then gave me several pieces of very valuable information. From the photographs of Jacson he had seen in several newspapers, he was sure that the prisoner went by the name—at least at that time—of Salvador Torkof, and was, or pretended to be, of Rumanian nationality.¹ In 1923-4, while still quite young, he had been chauffeur at Ciudad Juarez to a Miss Julia Anita Trevino. He also went with her to El Paso, Texas. In 1927-8, he had been chauffeur to a certain Mr. Wolf. Two years later he had succeeded in escaping from the Immigration authorities at El Paso. He was arrested the same year by the Immigration Office of New Mexico, and again escaped and crossed over into Mexico.

I took him to the Sixth Delegation, where Jacson-Mornard was still being kept, and left him there with two

¹ Russian Rumania, doubtless Bessarabia.

officers. I then went to see Trotsky's murderer, greeted him cordially and promised to bring him some books. Then I told him that an old friend of his, a Russian, wanted to see him when it would be convenient for him. He looked at me suspiciously and said: "I have no Russian friends. What you say surprises me very much."

"It seems that you knew him for years, here in Mexico," I said to him.

"I was never in Mexico before, Colonel," he replied with assurance.

I left him alone, on the pretext of going to fetch the books I had promised him. Without giving Jacson any warning, I led the Russian ex-aviator to a cell near to the one occupied by Jacson-Mornard, and told him what he was to do. I returned to the assassin and invited him to leave his cell to take a little air, so placing him that the Russian could observe him without difficulty. After a few minutes the latter suddenly left his hiding-place, advanced with open arms towards the assassin and said to him in Russian: "Hullo, friend Torkof!"

Jacson-Mornard was taken by surprise. He spontaneously opened his arms and a reply came to his lips. Then he took a step backwards when he saw that he was going to give himself away and replied in very correct Spanish: "I do not know you and do not speak Russian. Who are you?"

The other replied in Russian: "Don't you remember when you worked for me, and the bother you had at the United States frontier? You haven't changed."

Jacson-Mornard fell back on his usual tactics and kept silent. Before we withdrew, Plufea said to him:

"There's no doubt about it: you are Salvador Torkof."

And while we were going away the ex-aviator said to me:

"I assure you that I am not mistaken. It is certainly Salvador Torkof."

I now understood why Trotsky's assassin understood Spanish so well. It would have been difficult, if not impossible, for him to have learned to speak so correctly during the few months he said he had been in Mexico. Doubtless he had passed the last few years in Europe. Surely he had been in Spain during the Civil War. Perhaps it was there that he had entered the service of the G.P.U., unless even at that time he was already a member of this sinister organisation.

XIII

The Arrest of David Siqueiros

THE confrontation of Jacson-Mornard with the ex-aviator Plufea brought to an end my part in the interrogations of Trotsky's assassin. With his subsequent trials I was only indirectly concerned. But with one other aspect of the assassination I was still to be concerned—the pursuit of the fugitive painter David Alfaro Siqueiros.

During all the time I occupied the position of Chief of Secret Police, no other arrest caused me so much trouble as that of this wild and audacious Stalinist painter. Some days after the first attack he sent a letter to General Nunez in which he offered to present himself to the police if he were wanted. However, in spite of this promise, as soon as he saw himself mentioned as the organiser of the attack, he took care not to reply to the invitation which was sent to him.

On July 15th, I had received a letter from Trotsky, in which he said to me, among other things: "The newspapers say that the Arenal brothers and Siqueiros are at Manzanillo. If that is true, it is, in my opinion, of enormous importance. I have, in fact, been informed by a reliable source that a Soviet boat is due to arrive there at any date now, if it is not there already, to take on a cargo of metal for Japan. It is very probable, almost certain, that this boat is in reality coming to fetch Siqueiros, the Arenal brothers and other G.P.U. agents. I consider that this suggestion deserves every attention from competent authorities. You know that Luis Arenal visited the novelist Anita Brenner in New York, after the attack, but before the Press had revealed his

participation in the affair. I consider this fact as absolutely certain. The information according to which Siqueiros was also seen in New York does not deserve the same credence. It is probable that the rumour comes from the G.P.U. itself so as to lead the enquiry astray."

The agent Pedro C. Balderas and two of his colleagues undertook a meticulous enquiry in the port of Manzanillo. They carefully inspected all the boats which were at anchor there, registered in Japan or Norway, as well as another, of German nationality, which was to stay there for an indefinite time. Not the least sign of the fugitives was found anywhere, either in the boats or in the town itself and its suburbs.

Previously, my agents had searched several districts in the state of Guerrero, fixing their attention chiefly on a village in the region of Balsas, where Alfaro Siqueiros and Antonio Pujol had hidden in the house of a pretty school-teacher, Pujol's mistress. Perhaps the Arenal brothers and Angelica, Siqueiros' wife, had also been with them. But our agents arrived too late.

Before then, almost immediately after the first attack on Trotsky, we had carried out a search at Cuernavaca, where the Communist painter had gone after his criminal adventure. We made several visits to various town houses inhabited by foreigners of the same political tendencies, but without any success.

I began to think that the fugitive was hidden in Guadalajara. The house of an ex-civil servant was indicated to us as being his refuge. There existed a long-standing friendship between him and this man, dating from the revolutionary epoch, when Siqueiros had served as an officer under the orders of General Manuel M. Dieguez. I had received several intimations to this effect. In addition, Angelica Arenal had been seen travelling towards the capital of Jalisco in

very suspicious circumstances. She was described as a woman of about twenty-eight years of age, fairly tall and rather broad, with an oval face, wide brow, a straight nose, large mouth, thin lips, and medium complexion. Her hair was straight, parted in the middle, with the ends coiled, and a curl in the middle of her forehead. The description corresponded to the photograph we had of her. During the journey—by rail—she was dressed with a studied simplicity. She was accompanied by a little girl—so as not to arouse suspicion?—and carried two travelling cases.

The agents Balderas and Moreno were stationed at Guadalajara, and they managed to find out that on Thursday, June 3rd, that is to say, exactly ten days after the attack—Siqueiros and some of his accomplices had left this town for the direction of the mining region of Hostotipaquillo, in the state of Jalisco. I knew that the painter had several friends among the population and that he had previously carried out a campaign of Communist propaganda there. My agents also discovered that David and the two Spanish Communists had visited this district some days before the attack, doubtless to make sure of a safe refuge. But we did not know where he was then living.

As soon as the enquiry into the assassination of Trotsky was ended, and the presidential campaign had been brought to a close by the election of the new government—events which had occupied all our attention in the keeping of public order—we were again able to give all our time to the capture of the fugitive. From his unknown hiding-place, he sent virulent articles against the régime to several periodicals in Mexico City—articles which he headed as coming from the capital, so as to give the impression that that was where he was, with the obvious aim of putting us off the track, for he made the dates of his articles coincide with the date on which they were posted in the city pillar-boxes. One of these

reviews even published an interview with him, illustrated by photographs, all with the object of trying to give the impression that he was leading a normal life.

Such was the situation when, on the night of September 25th, I decided to go to Guadalajara with six of my men to try to find the fugitive. When I arrived at the enchanting capital of the state of Jalisco, I got in touch with the Governor, Señor Barba Gonzalez, and with the military commander of the region, General Macias Valenzuela, as well as some other notabilities of the place, from whom I obtained all sorts of facilities for the job I had in hand. There, at Guadalajara, I established my base of operations, but carefully avoided showing myself in public, for reasons which will be easily understood. I was determined not to return to the capital without my quarry.

I could not send my agent to Hostotipaquillo, our chief objective, without carefully concealing his identity, for, as I have said above, the Communist had reliable friends there who would not fail to warn him of our presence. We had therefore to be very careful. I sent the agents Figueroa and Ramirez disguised as pedlars on the buses which served this route, but the information which they brought back shed no light on the whereabouts of Siqueiros. They came back to Guadalajara, whence I immediately sent them to Hostotipaquillo with new instructions: they were to visit the surrounding farms, one selling ornamental plants and the other silex for paving. They could thus carry out their search without arousing suspicion.

Sidonio Ramirez was one of the most amazing specialists in detective work. When he arrived at Hostotipaquillo, he went straight to the church and asked the parish priest to receive his confession. After having told him what his supposed profession was, he said that he wished to settle down in the district, but, having heard that there were some

Communists led by a certain Siqueiros, and that he considered these Communists to be enemies of religion, he was afraid of coming in contact with them. This might prove very unpleasant for him, and was why he would be grateful if the priest could give him some advice on the matter, for priests generally knew all that was happening in the village. This ruse gave the best of results. Somewhat moved, the priest told him that "this evil man" had, in fact, been seen for some time in the district, and was protected by the municipal authorities and other elements of the population. He also told him that when this man came into the town he either lived at the house of the Alcade or at that of the Town Clerk, and that there were other Communists at Cinco Minas who were working with him. He advised Ramirez to give up his project, or, if nevertheless he went through with it, to take all possible precautions.

Armed with this information, I decided to go to Hostotipaquillo; but, of course, hiding my identity as Chief of Secret Police. But what could I do to escape notice?

The State of Jalisco was at that time in the middle of an electoral campaign for the renewal of the Provincial Assembly. There was political agitation everywhere. I thought we might take advantage of this circumstance to enter the district as political propaganda agents, a ruse which would permit us to reach Siqueiros by deceiving the watchfulness of his friends. We could more easily continue our search stationed at Hostotipaquillo.

General Nunez had placed at my service a major in the police force who knew the district very well. I asked him to find me someone who would help me by passing as our candidate. He brought me a landowner from Tequila, a man who was fairly rich, and who enjoyed a certain notoriety in the district. When he was told what his role was to be, he was very enthusiastic, even going so far as to take the thing



THE AUTHOR

seriously. We quickly had some electoral tracts printed and then decorated the lorry we had acquired for our electoral campaign.

I also got the military authorities to send to the detached Federal forces at the frontier instructions to watch all the outlets by which the fugitive might escape, supposing that he were in the district and, warned of our presence, tried to slip between our fingers. I sent them a description of Siqueiros and of his wife, Angelica Arenal, to facilitate identification.

And, as I might need some additional help at any particular moment, I also asked that they send me a few soldiers; they sent me thirty men of the 4th Battalion, under the command of a young and active lieutenant.

During all this time the agents Ramirez and Figueroa at Hostotipaquillo, and Felipe Sotomayor at the station at La Quedama, had been ordered to inspect all the trains on the South Pacific line, for it was possible that the painter would try to escape by this means.

We set out for our immediate quarters, Hostotipaquillo, a dreary dusty town. The remaining agents travelled with me in the lorry, as did the "candidate" and three of his "political co-religionists." Some distance behind followed the lorry full of federal soldiers.

At Quemada, agent Sotomayor was incorporated into our group. We went to within twelve miles of our objective. The barking of dogs indicated the presence of a farm at the side of the road. We got out of the lorries with the intention of engaging one or two good guides, who, along with the lieutenant, ten of the soldiers and agent Sotomayor, were to cross the fields towards Cinco Minas. The soldiers were told to occupy the village, without seeming to have any connection with the agent. I ordered the lorry containing the remainder of the soldiers to go as far as the town, where

they were to be garrisoned and to remain in contact with us. At dawn, the occupants of the first lorry, the supposed propaganda agents for the election, arrived at a house calling itself a hotel, situated in a little street near to the principal park.

As soon as it was possible, we went to the Town Hall to present ourselves to the Alcade, and to inform him of our electoral projects. He received us with a certain amount of distrust, almost as though he were afraid: then, when he was a little reassured, we started to chat about all sorts of subjects. He had not realised, apparently, the real reason for our presence in the district.

In the course of our enquiries we were able to verify the information given to Sidonio Ramirez. We also learned that the Municipal Chairman, his secretary—who was at the same time second-in-command of the 1st Squadron of the 58th Reserve Corps and the local Chief of Police, as well as some other municipal employees, constituted the band who were hiding Siqueiros.

Towards three o'clock in the afternoon the Alcade returned the visit which I had paid him. But great was my surprise when, on approaching us in the house where we were staying, he greeted me in these terms: "Good afternoon, Colonel Salazar!"

"You are mistaken." I replied, "I am not a soldier and have never been one. Or are you joking?"

"Come, come, Colonel. You are the Chief of Secret Police in Mexico."

"I assure you that you are mistaken," I replied, getting annoyed.

I must point out that I had let my beard grow, and that I was wearing the same country clothes as my agents, by which means I had hoped to pass unnoticed, even by those who had seen my photograph in the papers.

"You are wrong not to trust me, Chief," the Alcade went on. "As magistrate of the town, it is my duty to place myself at your disposal. You cannot deny that you are Colonel Salazar."

And, while he was speaking, he unfolded a printed leaflet, where I was shown on foot, on the occasion of a police affair which had evoked a good deal of interest at the time.

"Listen! Take off those black glasses and civilian clothes and become Colonel Salazar again," added the wily Alcade.

And, as he saw that his discovery annoyed me, he continued in a conciliatory tone: "Don't get annoyed, Chief. I repeat that you can trust me and can tell me how I can be of service to you."

"Very well," I said, "I am Colonel Sanchez Salazar, Chief of the Secret Police of Mexico, and the men who are with me are my agents. I have come incognito because I know what ground I am treading on. But I will put my confidence in your position and accept your aid. I have come to search for David Alfaro Siqueiros. Your first reply will show whether you are sincere or not. Let us see. Tell me: Do you know this man?"

He hesitated a moment, no doubt thinking that I might very well be aware of the fact that Siqueiros had stayed with him. At last he replied, calculating that in any case he had to tell me something: "Yes, we know David, señor. He has been here on various occasions. He's one of our trade union friends, nothing more. I assure you that we were unaware that he was a delinquent, and that the police were looking for him."

"Has he been here recently?"

"Yes, sir. And his wife as well. But he didn't show himself in public because he said he wasn't well. As we didn't know

that he was being searched for, we put him up in various houses, and in my own as well. I've heard that his wife has returned to Mexico City."

"Good. And when was the last time he was here?"

"Exactly two days ago."

"Two days ago. Is that all?" I exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes, sir. He left for the mountains, as he thinks that the sun and the pure air will do him good. He must be somewhere in the district, but I can't tell you where exactly, for when we asked him where he was going, he invariably replied: 'I don't know exactly, but we shall continue to see each other.'"

I realised that this man could tell me no more without revealing that he had been hiding Siqueiros. For the moment it suited me to say nothing: instead of having a declared enemy against me, I could still get a certain amount of collaboration out of him. And in any case, I could not arrest him, since his position as magistrate gave him immunity. The best thing was for me to keep a good watch over him.

"Very well," I said to him, "I am convinced that you are telling me the truth, and I accept the aid which you offer me."

Without losing a moment, I organised a column composed of agents and soldiers. The Alcaldé, the secretary, and the local Chief of Police, were followed by a few peasants who procured us some horses, and, in some cases, agreed to act as guides. What I really wanted was not to lose sight of them for a moment, convinced as I was that they would rush off to warn the man we were looking for of our presence. We started towards the nearest mountain. Still keeping contact with each other, we split up and literally beat the brushwood. We stopped at the farms, questioning the peasants and inspecting their outhouses. Night overtook us

when we were at the summit, and I was forced to give the order to return.

On the road back, an unpleasant incident occurred; the secretary, whose name was Luna and who was riding ahead, discreetly watched, took advantage of the crossing of a stream to get off his horse and escape, protected by the darkness and the unevenness of the ground. We lost quite a lot of time looking for him, but all to no avail. Would he go to Siqueiros and warn him of the danger which threatened him? Very probably.

Early the next day we continued our search in the same manner, but without any better success. I admit that I was beginning to feel rather discouraged: three days' searching and hard work since we had left Mexico City and we had obtained no results. Thus, in spite of my original decision not to return to the capital with empty hands, I decided to leave with two of my agents for Ixtlan del Rio in the State of Nayarit, to get into communication with General Nunez and ask him for permission to return to Mexico City in the event of my last hope proving a failure. This lay in the return of the agent Sotomayor from Cinco Minas. General Nunez authorised me to return to the capital. But the Press and the public were eagerly awaiting the results of my expedition. What account was I to render?

As I was returning from Hostotipaquillo, I met Sotomayor leading a prisoner. It was Cristobal Rodriguez Castillo, of Cinco Minas, an old friend of Siqueiros. He was an old miner racked by silicosis, and a father of a large family. Although a native of Hostotipaquillo, he had lived at Cinco Minas for twenty-eight years. He had known Alfaro Siqueiros since 1926, when they had together founded several trade union branches in the district and even led a strike which had lasted for sixty days and ended successfully. For this reason, and because he had lived there for

three years, the painter was very popular among the miners, even though there were but few of them who shared his political opinions.

"Don't forget you are a sick man!" I said to Rodriguez Castillo, after having listened to his first explanations. "The condition of your health needs a lot of rest, calm and careful attention. If you hide the truth from me you will be sent to prison. Your family will be condemned to perish, for it is clear that you will not have the means to support them. I cannot conceive that you prefer Siqueiros' friendship to your liberty, your life even, and above all the well-being of your family. I have proof that you have helped the painter, who, as you know, is a delinquent. You have hidden him and are therefore an accomplice. If you refuse to tell me where Siqueiros is hidden, much as I regret it, I shall be forced to take you back to Mexico City. Consequently, your fate depends on yourself."

As I was speaking, I realised that he was letting himself be persuaded. At last, overcome with emotion, almost weeping, he said: "You are right, Colonel. If in telling you what I know I betray a friend, in exchange I save my family, my wife, my children. I am lost, Colonel, but I am sure that you will save me, for you also must be a father."

And he started his story thus: "Towards the end of April, David made a quick journey through these parts. He stayed no more than a day at the most. We were not able to see each other, but he left me a note begging me to go to see him at Mexico City: he had included with the letter 50 pesos for the journey. So I went to the capital. I went to see him the same day as I arrived."

"Where did the meeting take place?"

"There, where he had told me in his letter, at the Hotel Majestic."

"Continue, Don Cristobal."

"During our conversation he asked me to find him two brave men who were ready to do anything, and to send them to him at Mexico City to carry out a very important job. He did not tell me what sort of job it was and I did not ask him, but I imagined it was to do with politics. He also told me that he would pay them 5 pesos a day and that he would give me 100 to give them for the expenses of the journey. I returned three days later, and, having discussed it with the Municipal Chairman and the Town Clerk, we agreed to send Genaro Casillas and Narciso Padilla, two brave fellows such as he had asked for. We gave them instructions to go to Mexico City and to report to him."

"They did not ask what it was about?"

"No, señor. They trusted us, and also Siqueiros. They were delighted to make the trip to the capital. The Town Clerk also went with them."

"What date was it when they went?"

"Towards the middle of May."

"Do you not know that these two men participated in the attack against Trotsky?"

"I learned that later. When Casillas and Padilla got back, they weren't very pleased about the job they had been made to do. We all decided to keep silent about it."

"When did you see Siqueiros again?"

"I learned that he had come to hide in the district. In the afternoon of September 11th, Luna came to tell me that David wanted to speak to me. The meeting took place in Luna's house, where Siqueiros was staying with his wife, Angelica Arenal. We spoke about the Spanish Civil War and the European situation, then of the attack on Trotsky, whom he called the leader of the world counter-revolutionary movement. We had a few glasses of beer together, and then I left. I must also tell you that I learned at Cinco Minas, where I live, that David and Angelica were hidden

from the end of June to the middle of July in Luna's house itself, then at Ruiz Ramos's, major of the Reserve Platoon.

"On two occasions, the painter was visited by his brother Jesus, who, along with Angelica, formed his contact with Mexico City. On one of these visits, Jesus arrived with a journalist and two photographers, but David was furious at such imprudence and refused to see them."

"Very good, Cristobal. And now, tell me: do you know when the painter last left the district and who was with him?"

"I cannot say exactly, for, as I have already told you, I don't live here, but I can assure you that it wasn't very long ago. And I know that a gunman named Marcos Orozco went with him."

"And you cannot tell me, more or less accurately, where he is now?"

He looked at me fixedly. He hesitated to make this final declaration to me. But doubtless he remembered his wife and children and replied with clear resolution: "Look for him in the farm of San Blasito, near to the mountain, about ten miles from here, and to the left of the place where they told me you went yesterday, near to the stream where Luna escaped. It is at San Blasito where they prepare his food for him, and sometimes he sleeps in the stables not very far away."

This interview lasted until nearly midnight. The poor man's weariness was evident. For my own part, I was convinced that he was telling me the truth.

This scene had taken place in the room which served us as lodging. We were surrounded by agents. I sent for the Municipal Chairman and the local Chief of Police, who lived in the adjoining buildings, and, after having repeated Cristobal's declarations and proved their connection with

Siqueiros, promised them that I would overlook their collusion if they gave me their frank and loyal aid in capturing the fugitive.

This time, knowing the consequences which the help they had given Siqueiros might hold for them, they offered to act as guides as far as the painter's hiding-place.

Time was passing; we had to act quickly so as to take advantage of the darkness in order to arrive at the farm by daybreak. I accordingly organised three groups of twelve men, agents and soldiers, with their guides. The plan was to approach the farm of San Blasito by different routes and by daybreak to have surrounded it over an area of about half a square mile. The possible places of escape were to be doubly guarded. The circle was to be gradually tightened, so that all the brushwood could be searched. Those who arrived first were to prevent the occupants of the farm from escaping, and, if they found Siqueiros, were to take him prisoner without exercising the slightest violence, except in the case of legitimate defence.

The first group, led by Sotomayor, set out about one o'clock, taking the road on the right side of the mountain, to turn eventually towards the north-east. Half an hour later, the second group, under the command of Figueroa, left in its turn, with orders to cover the east, after having contacted Sotomayor's group. And, finally, two hours later, Chino Arias left at the head of a third party, which, on skirting the left of the mountain, was to cover the south of the farm and there establish contact with the two previous groups. My own role was to see that the manoeuvre was carried out correctly, and to make any necessary decisions on the spot.

At dawn, the first part of the plan had been carried out. The farm was encircled and we began to close in. When we reached the farm, we began to search the outhouses. I

thought that the fugitive might be hiding in one of them. But only one was inhabited, by a peasant and his family. They were so afraid on seeing us that their legs trembled and they could not speak a single word. When they had recovered a little, the man admitted that a certain "Macario" came there, for whom they prepared meals. The description which he gave us left no doubt: it was certainly Siqueiros. The man told us that "Macario" had visited the farm the previous night, and, when pressed, said that he might be found beside the nearby stream of Los Otates.

The agents and soldiers rapidly dispersed in the direction indicated, a little distance outside the circle we had formed a few hours earlier, and soon met a person who seemed to be somewhat disconcerted. It was no other than Marcos Orozco, described by Cristobal Rodriguez as David's gunman. He carried a semi-automatic revolver for target-practice and a rifle, both .22 calibre, and had sixty-seven cartridges. Not without reticence he declared that he was employed by the painter, and that he frequently went to Hostotipaquillo, where he had been the evening before to fetch food. He did not know where his chief was. Was he trying to arrange an alibi? In any case, his arrest was a very good stimulant for us.

The search in the undergrowth now continued with greater enthusiasm under the burning sun and surrounded by the buzzing of mosquitoes which continually stung us. The officer Figueroa who, with some of his group, had gone on slightly ahead, turned a corner and came upon a man lying on a mattress, with his mouth wide open. It was David Alfaro Siqueiros!

This meeting put the finishing touch to a search which had lasted four long months. We were at first a little doubtful whether this was the man we were looking for, for his beard and his disguise changed his appearance. He wore a shirt and

khaki trousers which were dirty and worn, miner's boots and a wide-brimmed straw hat. He was surprised on opening his eyes to find himself in the hands of the police. But he offered no resistance, and, in fact, carried no firearm which would have permitted him to do so.

We were soon face to face. We greeted each other, for my part with mock cordiality.

"Good morning!" we said at the same time.

"Hullo. What are you doing here?" I added in a serious tone.

Obviously nervous and anxious, he tried to explain to me that he was not trying to escape, that he did not consider himself as a criminal, and that he had had nothing to do with the Trotsky affair. . . . But as it was not my intention to question him then, I interrupted his lies and, feeling it necessary to calm his nerves, I said: "I am first a soldier, and as such I promise you that I will take you back safe and sound to Mexico City. There, the proper authorities will undertake to judge your actions."

"Thank you, Colonel," he said affably.

We chatted about things which had no connection with the affair in hand, and I even told him of an episode in my military career when I was taken prisoner by the enemy during our bloody revolution, in the year 1915.

"I was a young man at the time," I added, "and since then I have had a deep respect for human life, unless it is a question of the payment of a debt of honour."

Whilst we were speaking, the officers made an inventory of the objects found on him: a leather purse with a strap, containing 1,600 pesos and 100 dollars in notes, a knife, a fountain-pen, a tube of tooth-paste, a little bottle of brillian-tine, and, finally, carefully wrapped in a dirty serviette, some pancakes made of maize.

On our return to Hostotipaquillo, we lunched in a restaur-

ant, and at five o'clock in the afternoon started the long journey back to the capital, taking with us, as well as the painter and his gunman, Marcos Orozco, those who had hidden him, among whom were two women employed by Siqueiros and Angelica Arenal. We got into the "election" lorry, Siqueiros between Figueroa and myself. The Army lorry, with the agents and prisoners, followed. About eight o'clock in the evening we stopped at Tequila to announce the great news to General Nunez. There is no need to say that this was a very pleasant surprise for him. We reached Guadalajara about midnight and there changed from the lorry to my private car, which I had left there, as it was too well known. I had to change cars at Morelia, which we reached at dawn, as my own needed some repairs. From there we rapidly crossed the famous mountain region of Mil Cumbres as far as Zitacuaro.

General Nunez was waiting for us there with about 100 journalists, photographers and foreign correspondents, hungry to hear to the last detail the story of the capture of Alfaro Siqueiros. The Chief of Police repaid us for our work in a speech of praise which finished with an embrace. The long convoy started off, and, at nine o'clock in the evening, I received in my office at Police Headquarters, with great pleasure, the crowd of journalists who flocked to hear the news, whilst David Alfaro Siqueiros, Marcos Orozco and the other prisoners were transferred to the lock-up at the Sixth Delegation. And thus was closed the final chapter of the enquiry on the famous Trotsky case. It was now a matter for justice to establish the guilt and mete out the punishment.

The task had been difficult, but we had succeeded both in shedding light on the facts and in arresting the guilty ones, thanks above all to the advice and aid which I received at all times from the Chief of Police. And thanks also to the brilliant work of my colleagues, whose names must be

shown here: Simon Estrada, Assistant Chief of Secret Police, Jesus Galindo, Major; Francisco F. Quezada, chief of my adjutants; Emilio Sanchez Mondragon (now deceased), José Lopez Meijia, Pedro C. Balderas, Francisco Figueroa Arceo, René T. Urquidi, Pedro Castenada, Liborio R. Santos, Felipe Sotomayor, Melchor Cardenas, Funes Arellano, Chino Arias (also deceased), José Clavé, Andrés Medina, Jesus Esparza, Martin Cruz Carreno, Porfirio Nila, Manuel Mendoza, Florencio Morena, Manuel F. Porrar, Sidonio Ramirez, Antonio Villanueva, the brothers Carillo de Albornoz, Armando A. Lara, Andrés Gonzalez (also deceased), and still others whom I now forget. And to Lieutenant Rodolfo Aceves Garcia, who accompanied me at the head of his men at Hostotipaquillo, my eternal gratitude.

Whilst it is true that I acted as their leader and that my will never faltered and fatigue never overcame me, any more than I let myself be intimidated by unjust and impatient criticism, without them we should never have arrived at the end, or we should have succeeded in raising only a corner of the veil. Thus it is to my colleagues, to their efforts and to their zeal, that the Mexican police owes one of its finest triumphs.

PART THREE

STALIN'S GANGSTERS AND THEIR
ACCOMPLICES

XIV

The N.K.V.D. Abroad

IN the course of a dangerous and lively struggle which has lasted eighteen years I have had occasion to see the G.P.U. at work in Russia and in numerous European countries, particularly in my own country, Spain, where, incidentally, all or almost all of those who prepared Trotsky's assassination served their apprenticeship.

Included among those apprentices was David Alfaro Siqueiros. This man has a revolutionary past. I will say more: the past of a sincere revolutionary, both from the political and artistic points of view. He is not a bad citizen, not a born criminal. But that is exactly what is serious in his case, for he was transformed into a criminal by a doctrine and a political machine above him, and he feels himself obliged blindly to obey it. Let me try to explain his case.

While still very young, Siqueiros threw himself into the heat of the Mexican revolution—Mexican without outside influence, springing from its own soil and its own problems. When he left the Army he had little success as an artist and, with the help of some friends, went to Europe with the intention of acquiring some culture and above all of learning how to paint. He occupied a minor post at the Mexican Embassy in Madrid. Later, in Paris, he felt himself drawn towards Lenin and Trotsky. And his sympathies went out to the Russian Revolution.

On his return to Mexico in 1923, he formed an artistic-political group with some other painters: José Clement Orozco, Diego Rivera, Firmin Revueltas; they founded

El Machete, an independent revolutionary periodical, which was not slow in rallying to the side of Communism. Siqueiros himself joined the Mexican Communist Party. From that moment he became a disciplined militant—disciplined to the point of crime, although more than once in disagreement with the majority. And, curious fact, the most popular Russian revolutionary at that time was Leon Trotsky—more popular than Lenin himself, whose physical appearance and written words appealed less to the imagination of a rather weary people. As for Stalin, his name was hardly known even in the circles of Russian bureaucracy. This same bureaucracy was later to make a dictator of him, but for the moment he did not exercise the slightest influence on international Communist circles. Siqueiros, with his strong and dynamic nature, has more than once exalted Trotsky above any other revolutionary figure. How then did he become, some years later, the attempted assassin of Trotsky and at Stalin's orders?

Much has been written on the formation and influence of myths in history. Georges Sorel, the trade union advocate for the theory of violence, demanded a new myth for the proletariat. The Russian Revolution provided the proletariat with perhaps the most powerful myth of our time, a myth with wide international repercussions. Sorel did not live to encounter it; otherwise fiercely rationalist, good French sociologist as he was, he would have thrown himself violently against it, and would have concluded with us that the duty of every free man to-day is to destroy it and not to cultivate it.

In its resemblance to the myths of antiquity nothing is lacking to the Russian myth; it rose from a backward people, who thought they had realised their emancipation and even that they represented the society of to-morrow; a people who practise the cult of heroes and gods of flesh and blood, and

seek to impose this cult by every means on the whole of humanity, a dramatically sick humanity—so ill, indeed, that there are numerous workers and even intellectuals who, in the most advanced countries, France, the United States, etc., seem ready to abandon for this barbarous myth nearly two centuries of rationalism and struggle for liberty.

During periods of transition, such as the present, the most progressive ideas are mixed up with the most retrogressive, simply because the latter are clamorously misrepresented as the Socialist revolution, the emancipation of the people, the sacrifice of the present for the future, the subordination of the individual to society, the aspiration towards the brotherly unity of men—certainly, all that is very noble and beautiful—but in this case the object of the myth is to hide the truth, which is quite different.

The working-class writer, Ciliga, after having worked several years in the U.S.S.R., has called it "the country of the great lie." The majority of Russians do not believe this because, for reasons of state, they are not allowed to believe it, but are kept in ignorance of the rest of the world, or know it only in a mistaken manner. A great number of foreigners, almost all the Communists and Communist sympathisers in other countries, with the exception of the corrupted bureaucrats, do not think thus either, because they know only the myth of the U.S.S.R. and not the reality. And all those who try to point it out are automatically denounced as "reactionaries," "Fascists," as being sold to such and such. This is not the moment to go deeply into this matter. We only wish to point out that the Stalinist myth, like the myths of ancient times, also demands human sacrifices.

But what has just been said is only part of the reply to the question asked above: How a Siqueiros—and Siqueiros is only a typical example here—could have become the

attempted assassin of Trotsky on Stalin's orders? That has necessitated quite a process of evolution on the part of the U.S.S.R. and of adaptation of the international Communist mentality. With Lenin dead and Trotsky beaten in the battle which followed his death, the overwhelming majority of Communists throughout the world have seen the revolutionary myth incarnated in the person of Stalin. Put differently, the myth continues to be incarnated in the power which is exercised by Stalin, with all the means of propaganda and corruption of which he disposes. Trotsky, deprived of power, turned out of the U.S.S.R., is considered as a rebel, the leader of the opposition, a heretic. After a series of crises, the most independent spirits, the idealists of the heroic epoch, the militants used to thinking for themselves—in a word, the heretics—left official Communism. Those who remained in the Party had to show their opposition to the degenerate and bureaucratic direction taken by the U.S.S.R. and the Comintern by supporting Trotsky.

The Stalinist dictatorship, daily becoming more rigorous, could not tolerate the existence of an opposition, for as long as this was allowed to exist the consolidation of totalitarian power might be compromised. Opposition must be suppressed, and by the only means which Stalin possessed: terror. And so we have the famous "purges" inside the U.S.S.R., followed by numerous assassinations abroad which were to culminate in the murder of Trotsky. The real independent revolutionaries were wiped out in the name of the revolutionary myth, for to the believers in the myth independence is synonymous with treason, and the penalty for treason is death. For Siqueiros, a Communist disciplined to the point of crime, the suppression of Trotsky, his ancient idol transformed into a rebel, was a duty imposed by the myth.

The Civil War in Spain was an admirable school for

political terrorism. The G.P.U. could choose its men, its tools, there. I do not doubt that Siqueiros was inspired by a sincere idealism in Spain. But the more or less disinterested combatant is soon converted into the instrument of a political machine, of a totalitarian machine, ruthlessly manipulated from Moscow. What mattered least to this apparatus was the liberty of the Spanish people; the only thing which did matter to it was the increase of Russian power in Europe and in the world.

It is well known that the U.S.S.R. is the only legitimate fatherland for the Communists. It is the country of the revolutionary myth, to which all others must be sacrificed. In Spain, Siqueiros really served the U.S.S.R. Through ignorance—like all men with a fixed idea, he is not very intelligent—through a love of adventure and through corruption, he became an active agent of the G.P.U. He served his apprenticeship as a political—that is, as a doctrinal—criminal there, in the service of the Russo-Stalinist myth. The Civil War at an end, the G.P.U. appointed him to carry out an important mission in Mexico, his own country. And Siqueiros accepted with pride, the pride of those who kill in the name of a myth.

But Siqueiros himself will undertake to show us that. Whilst he was lying hidden in the state of Jalisco, he felt himself inspired to become a journalist and even a bit of a "theoretician," a vain and pretentious exhibitionist. And, curious detail, his "theories" had revolution and counter-revolution as their subject, and were closely related to the offence on account of which the police were searching for him. By means of articles sent to an independent Mexican review, Siqueiros tried to justify politically his attempted assassination of Trotsky. It would be difficult to say whether the justifications were destined for others or for himself. In one of his articles he started by condemning "the

physical repression of the masses" and "the unbridled vindictive violence of the police, which has been let loose against those presumed guilty" (I am not responsible, of course, for the picturesque style of the author). He then declared his ideological opposition to the Government of General Cardenas "because he has authorised the repressive condemnation against transgressors of the law, without wishing to consider the political projects and human reasons which inspired their conduct, and their political position as well." And he adds, "because Cardenas' Government does not consider the fact that the authors of the attack were actuated by revolutionary despair, blameable, yes, but politically and humanly justifiable, against one of the greatest renegades to the cause of world revolution, to whom the President, in contradiction to his thoughts and political actions, had given asylum in Mexico." He then condemned violence in general, but justified it where it was a question of gaining converts to Communism. He ended his article by accusing Cardenas of having offended the government of the U.S.S.R. in according asylum to Trotsky.

In his statements before the magistrate immediately after his arrest, he again stressed his "theories." His was, he said, an exceptional case, to which Mexican laws, made by the bourgeoisie and capitalism, could not be applied. His crime was exclusively political. He had the right "by the means at his disposal" to get rid of these barracks belonging to Trotsky—illegally allowed into Mexico.

It is indeed terrible to see how many accomplices a Siqueiros—that is to say, the G.P.U.—manages to find on its criminal path. While justice is searching for him, Siqueiros' brother visits newspaper editors in a senator's car. This fact has been vouched for in a letter from the magistrate, Raoul Carranca Trujillo, addressed to the Chief of Secret Police. The independent newspapers welcome as contributions

from the would-be murderer—these monstrous theories in which he attempts to justify the right to commit any crime in the name of a doctrine and of a totalitarian power which is the enemy of humanity. They present this doctrine, without the least explanation, without a single word of condemnation, to the masses of their readers. But that is not all. The criminal for whom the police are searching is hidden with the aid of the municipal authorities; the Municipal Chairman, the Town Clerk, the local Chief of Police, the commander of a squadron of Reserves. . . . These notabilities are asked in advance to furnish him with two hired assassins. Is that all? No! Liberated on bail, awaiting trial, he finds much more highly placed accomplices who connive at his flight abroad. We possess a report from official sources on this subject.

Before quoting it, we wish to say that the magistrate, the First Judge at Common Law and the representative of the Public Prosecutor have charged David Alfaro Siqueiros—and his accomplices—under the First Penal Code with not less than nine offences: murder of Robert Sheldon Harte, attempted murder of Trotsky, association with malefactors, use and possession of firearms, usurping of office, fraudulent use of uniforms, car theft, violation of domiciliary rights and damage to property. Each of these offences in itself entails a relatively severe penalty; together, they become even more serious. Siqueiros succeeded in turning them to ridicule. This is how.

Shortly after Siqueiros had been released on bail, Señor Octavo Reyes Spindola, Mexican Ambassador in Chile, arrived in Mexico on leave.

One evening the Chilean colony in Mexico City held a banquet in his honour, presided over by the poet, Pablo Neruda, Chilean Consul in Mexico and influential member of the Chilean Communist Party, and Enrique Delano, Vice-Consul. Señor Reyes Spindola was seated on the right

of Don Manuel Hidalgo y Plaza, Chilean Ambassador in Mexico. In the course of conversation between the two ambassadors, the former told the latter that the Consul Neruda had sent him a passport for David Alfaro Siqueiros, so that he could go to Chile to paint the decorations on a school. The Chilean Ambassador remarked: "I am exceedingly surprised that Neruda has granted a passport without my authorisation to a person under prosecution by Mexican law."

Señor Reyes Spindola replied: "It has been done in return for what was done for General Herrera."

The Chilean General Ariosto Herrera had had to leave the Army following an attempt at provoking a revolution, for which he had been condemned to three years' exile. Señor Hidalgo y Plaza then said: "I consider, sir, that it is a serious mistake. Señor Herrera was in Mexico as a result of a sentence officially passed on him by the Chilean tribunal, whilst, in the case of Alfaro Siqueiros, they are seeking to outwit Mexican justice."

And he added: "I will not agree to that under any pretext. I shall immediately give orders to the Chilean Consul to cancel the passport."

Señor Reyes Spindola then revealed that it was as a result of a request made by the Mexican Government, to which Señor Hidalgo y Plaza replied: "If the Mexican Government has requests to make, it must make them to the official representative of the Chilean Government, and that is the Ambassador and not the Consul-General. I repeat, sir, that I categorically refuse to allow Alfaro Siqueiros to enter my country."

When the banquet was over, the Chilean Ambassador ordered Neruda to cancel the passport, adding that he would report the incident to the Chilean Government. The Minister of Foreign Affairs in Chile completely agreed with his

Ambassador's attitude and suspended Consul Neruda for a month without pay.

The next day Señor Hidalgo y Plaza went to see the Secretary for Foreign Affairs in Mexico, the Licentiate Ezequiel Padilla, to whom he expressed his surprise at what had happened. The latter stated that he knew nothing about it. Was he sincere? If so, why did he not show it by taking sanctions against his Ambassador in Chile? If the latter had acted on his own initiative in trying to help a criminal evade justice, then that merited immediate removal from office and constituted, in addition, an offence of direct complicity.

This same Señor Reyes solicited and obtained a transit *visa* for the Central American countries for Siqueiros. The Cuban Government accorded him the right of asylum. A highly-placed civil servant in the Mexican Government asked the Panagra Air Company for two places in an aeroplane which was to call at Cuba; he did not give the names of the travellers, saying that they were two official passengers. This civil servant accompanied the two passengers in question to the aerodrome, and gave their names at the last minute: they were Alfaro Siqueiros and Angelica Arenal.

The travellers went to see the Mexican Ambassador in Cuba. The Ambassador, Señor Ruben Romero, received them with displeasure, and, knowing that they were wanted by the judiciary authorities of his country, asked for instructions from the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The latter ordered him to treat them well and to help them get away quickly, for Siqueiros must not stay in Mexico or near it. It was thus evident that the Secretary for Foreign Affairs had lied to the Chilean Ambassador and that everything had been carried out on his orders.

Some days later, Señor Reyes Spindola returned to Chile, where he officially requested the Chilean Government to grant a *visa* of entry to Alfara Siqueiros and his wife. This

request was presented in the name of the Mexican Government. Alfaro Siqueiros and his wife remained for some time in Chile, then calmly came back to Mexico. There, the author of the attempt on Trotsky's life, found guilty of nine serious offences, again occupied the Communist platforms, and was received with cheers as though he were a hero. And he is sufficiently cynical to declare in the Press that he does not seek to evade the responsibility for the attack against Trotsky, which was the act of a *franc-tireur*, but which nevertheless constitutes "the honour of his life."

The charges against David Siqueiros still stand. His guilt—for nine serious offences—has been established. But the trial has never taken place. And consequently the delinquent has not been absolved. He is at provisional liberty. Can this be allowed to continue, despite Mexican and world opinion?

The author of these lines has a sincere regard for the hospitable country of Mexico. Many of his friends, refugees from Spain and other European countries, are resting in its soil. On several occasions the G.P.U. has almost succeeded in sending him to join them. It is therefore not without regret that he has related these facts. But is Mexico a unique example? Unfortunately, no! The G.P.U. has committed some horrible crimes and found some highly-placed accomplices in Spain. It has also been able to do so on a reduced scale, but also by relying on accomplices, in Cuba, Chile and other American countries. The ex-agent of the G.P.U., Krivitzky, was assassinated in Washington. My friend, Carlo Tresca, the great humanitarian and fighter for freedom, fell riddled with bullets in New York. These two crimes have remained unpunished.

The horrors which occur every day in the European countries under Communist domination defy description. In different countries of Western Europe the G.P.U.

retains part of its power. How is it possible to come to terms with crime elevated to the height of an institution? Perhaps humanity, ill or masochist, feels itself attracted towards suicide? Fortunately, there are still many men ready to live and to die rather than capitulate. And there are still many who hate crime. Let them remain separate if they wish, but let them strike together. It is an old watchword of Lenin.

XV

Jacson-Mornard: The Attempt at Rescue

THE G.P.U.—now renamed the M.V.D.—looks after its foreign agents very well. It demands all from them, but protects them and rewards them—when they do not falter. But those who vacillate or weaken, those whose consciences trouble them or who show the slightest inclination to criticise, those who know too much or who, in spite of themselves are liable to put the organisation in danger, as was Robert Sheldon Harte—all these are mercilessly annihilated. The institution and its supreme powers must come first. Death is the totalitarian guarantee. And what do one or a hundred victims more or less matter? They have periodic purges, not only as an example or as a punishment, but as a preventive measure; or as physical and moral usury. After all, there are always thousands and thousands of candidates ready to occupy these vacant places. But those who do not disappear and who hold firm, those who are ready for anything in any circumstances, they can attain the highest places.

And those of its agents who are imprisoned or condemned? Certainly we shall be able to show that it has not abandoned Jacson-Mornard, the assassin of Trotsky.

Closely examined, this man has all the characteristics of a typical agent of the G.P.U. He has no country—he had renounced his own—and is ready to adopt no matter what other according to the needs of the organisation to which he belongs. Is he a Belgian, Canadian, Rumanian or Spaniard? It is all the same. Russian or not by birth, his only country is

Stalinist Russia. For her he is ready to sell and betray all the others, whatever their political or social régime may be.

It is the same with his patronymic names. He has none, for he is ready to adopt no matter what name according to circumstances. In each country and at each moment he has several different ones. In Mexico he appeared once as Torkof and later as Jacson, and in the end said he was called Mornard, without having one identification paper to prove it. In Spain, it seems that he called himself Mercader. Several old members of the International Brigade affirm, in fact, that he was a Spanish Communist called Mercader, who lived in Belgium with his family, and that his mother is at present in the U.S.S.R. They even add, as proof of his identification, that he has a scar on his forearm. If the mother is in Russia, it is evident that her life depends on the silence of her son.

For many years he lived anywhere and everywhere. In all the countries in which he happened to find himself, he carried out the work of one country only: Russia. His brain and his will were directed from an office in Moscow. He is not allowed to have any will or brain of his own. He is forbidden to think for himself or to have a personal conscience. He is a totalitarian soldier, a blind agent of an absolute power. It is not for him to say whether what he is sent to do is moral or immoral, good or bad (even though new moral criteria have been created, according to which all is good which serves the U.S.S.R. and all is bad which opposes it). He is sent, and that is all. He thus lives a life, in theory amoral and in practice iniquitous, in the service of a cause, which he has no option but to consider the only good one. His job is to lie and to deceive. Everything about him, in fact, is lies and deceit: when he swears his love for a Sylvia, when he says he shares the feelings of certain

idealists, when he justifies his journeys and his means of existence . . . and afterwards, when he has to explain his crime. All truthfulness is forbidden him: he is condemned to perpetual lying.

Perhaps that is his hell on earth. Has he come to it through fanaticism, a spirit of adventure, or corruption? Doubtless through them all, and, finally, through terror. It is possible that on one occasion in his life he may have felt the wish to pull himself together, to rebel against the monstrous machine which dominates and directs him, to escape the miserable destiny which had been traced out for him. He was not allowed to: he was made to understand that it was too late. There is no escape open to him. He must remain faithful to the end. That, or death. His own, and that of someone dear to him.

Everything has been thrown into the balance, without giving him any choice. Did they want him to kill? He killed. To betray? He betrayed. To go to prison? He went. And even in prison, in addition to the power which the law holds over him, he continues to feel himself a prisoner of a superior power: the monstrous machine which is set in motion in Moscow. He continues to belong, body and soul, to this machine, as Faust did to Mephistopheles. If one day it should become necessary for him to escape, he will escape. And if escape means death, he will have to die.

Such men are explosives in human form—explosives more terrible than those which were discovered during the last war, for they pass for human beings and are quite unsuspected by the rest of the world. They form, in any case, the most dangerous political arm of which Moscow disposes in this tragic epoch. They are the messengers of death, as mysterious and threatening as death itself. The victim is pointed out to them and they fall upon him. Humanity will be threatened as long as such men exist, blind agents of a

power and organisation which can dispose as it pleases of all which life and death hold most sacred. The future of man is threatened. And moral values, dignity, truth, right, justice, freedom—simple bourgeois prejudices, according to Stalinism—all are threatened. It is not a question of simple intellectual juggling or of flights of fancy, but of one of the most tragic realities of our time.

Yes, all is lies and deceit about this human robot. Above all, the letter which was found on him. There is no doubt that it was written in New York, examined, discussed and re-written. To cover up this fact, the assassin had to invent a fantastic typewriter. It is proved by the signature and the date written in pencil at the last minute, and the fact that in his declaration he did not remember its contents very well. The G.P.U. agents in New York had very carefully composed it, as though it were a document of high policy on which depended the future of Russia, a document more important for them than all the theories of the Comintern. There was one major preoccupation in the minds of its composers: to give satisfaction to the leaders and, above all, to the supreme leader.

Whilst Jacson-Mornard carried it on him, well hidden, like a bomb ready to explode, a copy had no doubt been sent to Moscow. In the diplomatic bag, naturally. In conformity with G.P.U. habits, this letter was aimed to kill two birds with one stone: on the one hand, to present Trotsky as the sworn enemy of the Russian people and as the organiser of the assassination of Stalin, and, on the other, to destroy Trotskyism, both morally and politically. It would be left without a leader. One of its members had been "disillusioned" by him and had killed him. In almost all the deeds of the G.P.U. one finds the same duplicity and the same treachery: it is not enough for it to murder; it must then dishonour the victim and throw the guilt on to

another. But by the same token of this clumsy Machiavellianism, the G.P.U. shows its trade mark, its own particular seal.

This letter is a monumental stupidity: first, by the simple fact of its having been written, and, secondly, even more by its contents. It is as though the G.P.U.'s visiting card had been put in the assassin's pocket. There is no doubt that it was prepared in the hope that the latter, in his turn, would be killed. Thus the G.P.U. flattered itself that it could kill three birds with one stone: its agent too would be killed, and this would be his "testament." The fact that Trotsky, fatally wounded, had prevented his secretaries from killing his murderer, had been a supremely clever move on his part; he had retained his political reasoning to the end. Thus all the lies, all the treachery could be unveiled, or almost all of them.

Yet, as the account of General Salazar has shown, almost everything concerned with the assassin is a tissue of lies, contradictions and artifices. Throughout the whole of the sinister story which surrounds this miserable being, there are only one or two signs of reality: immediately after the attack, in a moment of grave nervous tension, when, feeling his life threatened, he lost control of himself and cried out in anguish: "He made me do it" and "They are keeping my mother a prisoner!" Then, when he had pulled himself together and realised the role he had to play, he obstinately denied that the G.P.U. had had a hand in the murder. The determination of the murderer to deny this fact is in itself proof. Without any doubt this denial was a strict condition which had been imposed on him.

Was his mother really imprisoned? I believe it is perfectly possible. When an important mission is confided to an agent or an official of the G.P.U. he is often invited to bring his wife, his children and his mother to the U.S.S.R.: they will be well looked after there, and sheltered from any possible reprisals. Once they are there, the agent is lost, for his

family will be kept as hostages to ensure that he performs his task. Let us add that the job of murdering Trotsky was not just important, but of the highest importance for Stalin and the G.P.U.; it was mission No. 1 at that period.

There is another undeniable fact; during the months which preceded the murder, Jacson-Mornard was living in terror. He felt himself watched, under compulsion, threatened. It was as though he were caught up in a terrible net. After the failure of the attack of May 24th, in the preparation of which he had incontestably taken part, he felt that the moment was coming when he must enter the scene. Had not everything been prepared towards this end? When he was recalled to New York, he knew to what he was returning. He came back with definite orders: "Now, it's up to you! We have kept you in reserve for this. Be careful not to fail, for Moscow will not forgive you, and will not forgive us either. And if you get out alive, be careful not to say anything. This letter will speak for you. If you don't carry out the job, you know what to expect for yourself and for . . ."

During the last few days he was pale, felt nervous, ill. He dared not look at Sylvia. She had the impression of speaking to a wall, to a man obsessed by a fixed idea. However great was his fanaticism and his cynicism, all that was only to be expected. Perhaps, if the murder had depended on him alone, he would have abandoned it. But it did not depend on him. He had received the order to kill and he killed. Now he had been ordered to keep silent, and he kept silent. A typical agent of the G.P.U.!

And what has happened to this typical agent? Certainly he has not been leading a very wretched life. He says that in Belgium he has a mother and a brother who are millionaires (and that his father on his death, left a fortune of from 3,000,000 to 4,000,000 Belgian francs). But, up to the

present, they have not shown any signs of life. How is it that, during all these years, he has not tried to get in touch with them? Or they with him? Neither does he appear to have any friends in the world. And yet he wants for nothing. He is the rich prisoner of the Mexican penitentiary.

Up to the middle of May, 1947, he occupied a large cell, very calm, well-ventilated and sunny. He was smartly dressed, ate very well, drank coffee and liqueurs, smoked best-quality cigarettes. He had a good library and a wireless set at his disposal and money in abundance, or rather superabundance. Where did this money come from?

The Communist Dr. Esther Chapa, Chief of the Prison Delegation for the Prevention of Crime up to May, 1947, nominated him as her secretary—that is to say, as her delegate in the prison. As such he was able to move about freely and at the same time had a great deal of influence over the warders and the prisoners. With the complicity of the Prison Secretary, also a Stalinist agent, the prison had become a dangerous Communist centre. Dr. Chapa, Jacson-Mornard and the Prison Secretary exercised, in fact, a veritable dictatorship there. The scandal went so far that a large number of the prisoners rebelled against it, and, after a brisk intervention on the part of the Mexican authorities, this state of affairs was remedied. Dr. Chapa was dismissed and Jacson-Mornard lost the privileges which he had enjoyed—and abused.

In the photographs which were taken of him in prison he is smiling and seems to be well satisfied with life; in fact perfectly happy. One might say that he defies the whole world. There is not a Russian worker or peasant, condemned to slavery and poverty, who would not envy his lot. And officials of the Stalinist régime must also envy him, for, in spite of their privileges, they do not know what their fate will be to-morrow. In comparison with them, Jacson-

Mornard is one of the privileged. He is a hero for Stalin and his bureaucracy. He is Trotsky's "heroic" and "glorious" assassin.

The G.P.U. itself took care to prepare Jacson-Mornard's defence. It sent a Mexican journalist at the beginning of the trial to interview him even in the prison where he was interned. The interview appeared in a large independent review which was later to fall under Communist control. The interview bore the following title in large letters: "WHY I KILLED TROTSKY." The murderer explained that during the conversations he had with the ex-Bolshevik leader he understood all at once what, until then, had appeared enigmatical in the Moscow trials. It became evident to him that the accused, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Rykov, Smilga, etc., were all agents of Germany and Japan. "And I understood that Trotsky was directly tied up with acts of terrorism and sabotage carried out in the U.S.S.R. I understood that he was betraying the only country where the revolution had triumphed. And that ended by alienating any feeling of sympathy I had for him."

The journalist sent by the G.P.U. then innocently asked him the following question: "Then you came to the conclusion that Trotsky was an agent of Hitler, as the Communists say?"

And the assassin caetgorically replied: "Absolutely."

This interview was reported during the first fortnight in February, 1943, while the trial of the assassin was taking place. Hitler had broken his pact with Stalin and was at war with the U.S.S.R., which had now become, despite its leaders, the ally of the Anglo-Saxon powers. In August, 1940, in the letter which was found on him, as in the statements which he made immediately afterwards, Jacson-Mornard presented Trotsky as an agent of the United States, of the Dies Committee and of the American Consul, who, according to

him, made frequent visits to Trotsky and gave him large sums of money. In February, 1943, the thesis had radically changed: Trotsky had become—once more, as at the time immediately preceding the war—an agent of Hitler. Dead or alive, they made him change camp according to the one in which Stalin found himself. And in each case Jacson-Mornard's remarks were dictated by the G.P.U.

In the course of this interview, the assassin presented an entirely new theory of how he committed the crime. This is his actual declaration: "Nevertheless, I continued to see him, a fact which gave rise at each interview to a new conflict between us, since we were both very violent. One day I took an article for him to publish. He read it with a distrustful air, and, throwing it on the table, as though it were a piece of useless paper, said to me: 'You are nothing more than a military idiot!' I angrily replied by insulting him. He made as though to draw his revolver, and I replied with what I found nearest to hand, the ice-axe."

Now, neither more nor less, Jacson-Mornard killed Trotsky . . . in legitimate defence! It was Trotsky who made as though to attack him by seizing his revolver, and he . . . he took the first thing which came to his hand and killed him. And the first thing which fell to his hand happened to be the ice-axe. He was not carrying it sewn in his raincoat: it was Trotsky who had placed it conveniently to hand so that Mornard could kill him. But his letter of confession? An invention of the police. And his previous statements? Falsified by the police.

All the papers containing his statements—at least thirty of them—are in my possession. Each paper bears the signature of Jacson-Mornard in the margin. Also falsified? And his theory of being "disillusioned"? And the final rehearsal two days before the actual crime? And the reconstruction of the crime in the presence of the magistrate, the police

and the Press? And . . . but what use to continue if all were false? The only definite thing now is . . . legitimate defence.

We are not in the least surprised that the G.P.U. had the stupidity to invent this new theory. Its leaders work in Russia, and there all is possible. And, according to totalitarian mentality, what is possible there must also be possible throughout the whole world. How did the defence bolster up this theory? By Jacson-Mornard's lawyer asking that all the previous statements made by his client should be considered as false. They had been extracted from him, it seems, by the help of . . . injections. (The letter also?) Neither had the statements made by Trotsky's secretaries any value, for they hated Mornard for having deprived them of their means of existence. Nathalie Sedova's evidence also was not worth much: she was the victim's wife, and was also an old woman who was now half mad. Then what was there which had any value? Only the new "confession" of his client.

"Is not the theory true according to which, while Trotsky was reading, Mornard attacked him and the ex-commissar had time to bite his hand? It was this sentence, 'It's no good. You are only a military idiot,' which unleashed Mornard's fury, provoking a sudden movement of anger on his part." And this other pearl: "Jacson-Mornard is guilty of the offence of homicide in the course of a struggle, and, frankly, I am not convinced that the victim was not really the one to provoke it. And I do not know whether the murderer was the provoker or the provoked."

The representative of the Public Prosecutor, however, clearly established all the circumstances which aggravated the crime of homicide: the betrayal, completely proved throughout the trial and by the written confession of the accused; the taking advantage of the victim, since he was armed while Trotsky was unarmed; and treachery, because,

to distract his attention, he gave Trotsky an article to read and attacked him from behind at the moment when the Russian exile least expected it. On the basis of these proved facts, the Public Prosecutor asked for the maximum penalty under the law then in force: twenty years and a day penal servitude. And Jacson-Mornard was condemned to this sentence. The G.P.U. had found a lawyer, but not a judge, ready to serve it.

Fourteen months before the trial—at the end of December, 1941, to be exact—I came to know by chance of the defence which the G.P.U. was preparing. An important special agent, coming from Moscow, had just arrived at Havana. He brought precise directions concerning the fate of Trotsky's assassin, and had the sum of 20,000 dollars at his disposal to carry them out. This agent had been told to remain in Cuba. He sent an unknown Cuban woman, a militant Communist, with instructions and money to Mexico. (I will not name her, as shortly afterwards she had the dignity to leave the Communist Party.) It was not the first time that this woman, a long-standing adversary of the Machadist dictatorship, had visited the Mexican capital: a courageous woman, with character and daring, but not at all discreet.

Following the instructions of the special agent who remained in Cuba, a not less special Committee was formed in Mexico, consisting of three persons who had seven others under their orders. The first thing they did was to instruct the assassin. Contact between him and the Committee was assured by Dr. Esther Chapa, who later made Mornard her secretary. The post which she held gave her free access to the prison. It was this Committee which, in agreement with the lawyer, prepared the plea of "legitimate defence," and which also composed the new "confession" of Mornard, which consisted of six sheets, written on both sides. The

assassin had only to sign it. It was also the Committee which decided that the lawyer, making use of his rights, should submit the ex-Chief of Secret Police to an interrogation on the following points: (1) whether he had received special orders to devote himself to the preliminary investigations other than from the Public Prosecutor; (2) if, at the moment of questioning Mornard, he had consulted any doctors; (3) if he had ordered injections for the prisoner, and, if so, what had they contained; (4) if the accused had appeared visibly excited, depressed, or out of sorts; (5) how many times he had confronted him with his friend Sylvia Agelof; (6) if he had allowed the Belgian *Chargé d'Affaires* to have an interview with Mornard; (7) if he had brought an agent of the United States police before the accused and if, helped by the latter, he had submitted the accused to a special interrogation. . . . It was, of course, an attempt to destroy the effect of all the declarations, of all the witnesses, of all the proofs. Colonel Leandro A. Sanchez Salazar had no difficulty in reducing this manoeuvre to nothing. And it was the G.P.U. Committee, in the end, which insisted that the assassin, in the presence of his lawyer, be conducted to the victim's house, for a new reconstruction of the crime. . . .

In spite of all its efforts, the special Committee soon realised that the plea of "legitimate defence," even though finally it was put forward at the trial, could not be upheld. It then took on a new task, the escape of Jacson-Mornard. The special agent in Havana even arranged for the trial to be delayed. The assassin received new instructions from Dr. Chapa. But he did not seem very enthusiastic. He found himself, in fact, in a very delicate situation. He could not refuse to escape, for he knew that a G.P.U. agent must never disobey, if he does not wish to expose himself to grave danger. Whether he be in prison or at liberty, he must

obey under penalty of death. The G.P.U. has means of assassination at its disposal no matter at what moment, even in prison. He could not, therefore, refuse the escape which was ordered. But what was to be his lot if, thanks to the G.P.U., he succeeded in escaping?

They promised to send him to Russia. But would he get as far as that? Would they not get rid of him before then? And, once in Russia, if he arrived, what would they do with him? Jacson-Mornard knows perfectly well the methods of the G.P.U. He knows how it gets rid of its agents once they have carried out their tasks and have become a liability. Only death is capable of keeping certain secrets. And often not even death itself. Even at the best—that is to say, if they did not get rid of him—he would be forbidden to show any signs of life, and subjected to the strictest surveillance. His escape was not to avoid his being condemned, but to prevent the trial from taking place, and, above all, to have him watched and to make sure that he never talked. Death is perhaps less terrible than such a life.

I can easily understand Jacson-Mornard's lack of enthusiasm. For he felt much more secure in his Mexican prison than "at liberty" in the hands of the G.P.U.

Why did the plan of escape fail? In the first case because the Mexican authorities were warned in time and took the necessary steps to prevent it. When ten people are concerned in such an affair, it may easily happen that one of them is not quite so reliable as he seems, or that he feels the need to take someone into his confidence. The G.P.U. agents are sometimes spies who are being watched by the police.

The fact is that the plan was discovered. And in addition to the measures ordered by the Mexican authorities, the judge and the Public Prosecutor charged with the affair gave proof of honesty and vigilance. It would have been really scandalous if the same thing had happened with

Jacson-Mornard as happened with David Alfaro Siqueiros, whose trial has not yet taken place at the moment of writing. Mexican honour could not accept such a second affront.

For the honour of Mexico, a country to which I am very grateful, and for which I hold a sincere affection, I believed it my duty to denounce what was being prepared in an article which appeared in an independent review. This article was reproduced in Cuba, in Chile, in the Argentine. I will finish this book with the same words with which I concluded the article:

"It will be said, perhaps—and it has already been insinuated in certain periodicals—that I have interested myself in this affair solely from a desire for vengeance. It is nothing of the sort. I am not, and never have been, a Trotskyist. When I arrived in Mexico City, I did not even wish to go to see Trotsky, with whom I had had a violent controversy some years previously. The man Jacson-Mornard holds not the slightest interest for me, for he is only the tool. What does interest me are the activities of the G.P.U.; the exposure of the methods of corruption and terror which the G.P.U. inspires everywhere, and the prevention of them as far as possible. Love of liberty and the truth drive me to oppose such methods, all utterly inhuman. Those who, as I do, know them from the bottom, and can reckon numerous comrades and friends among their victims, and who themselves have also been within a hair's-breadth of being victims, owe it to themselves to denounce publicly these methods. We shall carry out this duty at the same time as we salute the heroic struggle of the Russian people against the Nazi invasion. One thing does not exclude the other. On the contrary, the Russian people would lose all right to existence if it were possible for a single instant to confuse them with the criminal methods of the G.P.U."

APPENDIX

The Real Identity of Trotsky's Assassin

THIS book, which is the result of a scrupulously exact investigation based on the only complete and official documentation which exists, would, however, be incomplete if the real identity of Trotsky's assassin remained in doubt. I refer, of course, to the actual assassin, the simple instrument of execution, for regarding the instigator there can be no shadow of doubt.

As has been said in other parts of the book, various Catalonian refugees, who occupied positions of trust in the Communist organisation during the Spanish Civil War, and who now stand aloof from it—or are opposed to it—have identified the assassin without leaving any room for doubt. To prove their statement, they assured me that he had a scar on the right forearm, caused by a wound at the front. I had verified this myself without the assassin's knowing it. But, always careful in the extreme, I wanted to have other, complementary proof.

At last I have these proofs. And some of the main ones come from Moscow itself. The Iron Curtain created by Stalinist totalitarianism to isolate the martyred Russian people from the rest of the world has its weak spots and holes. In any case, I now find myself in the position of being able to make a series of statements and of accepting responsibility for them. In conclusion, I may say that I can at any moment cite witnesses to prove the accuracy of what follows.

The mother of the assassin is still alive, and is called Caridad Mercader. She is a Catalonian, resolute, energetic, fanatical, a woman who has always blindly carried out

Stalinist policy to the letter. She lived in Belgium and in France for many years. Her five children were brought up in these countries—four sons and a daughter. This explains the perfect French which they all speak, and why Trotsky's assassin, the third child, could try to pass for a Belgian.

It was believed that Caridad Mercader entered the service of the G.P.U. in Spain when the Civil War had already started. That is not so. Her relations with this sinister political organisation of espionage dated from a long time before that: in 1928, she was already in their service in Paris. She formed part of a "special cell" controlled by the secret service, which acted—and is acting—under cover of diplomatic protection. But she and other agents of the G.P.U. were infiltrated into political parties independent of Communist organisations. These are old tactics of the G.P.U. practised to the point of abuse in my poor Spain before their present use to-day in the countries under the yoke of Stalin. With her daughter Montserrat, Caridad Mercader was for several years a member of the branch of the French Socialist Party (S.F.I.O.) in the 15th District of Paris. The old militants of this branch know them and remember them perfectly.

During the Spanish Civil War, Caridad Mercader was an active member of the United Socialist Party of Catalonia (P.S.U.C.), affiliated to the Communist International. She showed proof of a blind fanaticism and of an utter lack of scruples in the exercise of terror tactics. She was therefore very valuable to the chief agents of the G.P.U. and in particular to the most important of them all, "Pedro," ex-agent in Paris, Brussels and Barcelona and one of those who organised the system of political and police repression which has been fastened on to Hungary under Stalinist totalitarianism. Caridad Mercader became one of the confidential agents of the G.P.U. while in Catalonia, and dragged her children along with her into this terrible organisation.

These children go under the name of Rio Mercader. The

eldest lives in Paris and suffers from a chronic illness. The second is the daughter, inseparable from Caridad. The third is the unfortunately celebrated Jacson-Mornard, the actual assassin of Trotsky. The fourth died in Spain. The youngest son, Luis, lives in Moscow and is finishing his studies there as an engineer.

This so-called Mornard was a member of the Communist Militia of Catalonia. It was at the front that he received the wound in his right forearm to which I referred above. No one knew where his money came from. He never seemed to do any work, frequented the brothels, and in general found satisfaction for all his vices. He was a petty adventurer without a future. Following the example of his mother, he became one of the docile instruments of the G.P.U. Once in their hands, they decided that he should be the one to kill Trotsky in case the attempt by the painter, Alfaro Siqueiros, following the plot described in this book, should fail. There is one obscure point here in the police investigation: it concerns the reference to his previous residence in Mexico under the name of Salvador Torkof. Was there some confusion on the part of the Russian pilot who said that he recognised him as his former chauffeur? Or was this pilot himself an instrument of the G.P.U. sent to increase the confusion of the police and to prevent them from discovering the real identity of the assassin? Anything is possible. The said pilot has disappeared. In any case, this point is of relatively little importance.

Caridad Mercader lived in Moscow from 1940 to August, 1944. She was treated there as an important personage. She maintained direct relations with Beria, all-powerful chief of the N.K.V.D. She was strictly prohibited from speaking with anyone about the affair in which her third son had been involved. In spite of which, she did speak about it. In particular, with some of the most confidential militant Communists who were refugees in Moscow. There are some things which the N.K.V.D. has never succeeded—and will never succeed—in completely repressing: the

individual conscience, the confidence between comrades and intimate friends, family ties and the maternal instinct . . . and, of course, the critical judgment of foreign militants, for whom direct contact with the real Russia must come as a tremendous shock. So tremendous and dramatic must have been this shock in the case of José Díaz, ex-General Secretary of the Spanish Communist Party, that he threw himself from the third floor of the Hotel Inturist in Moscow. Caridad felt herself seized by remorse, and began to hate, in the bottom of her heart, the Russian tyranny and the chiefs of the organisation to which she and hers were perhaps for ever enslaved.

After long and persevering efforts, Caridad Mercader managed to get out of Russia on the date indicated above. She left her youngest son, who is held as hostage to guarantee the silence of his mother and brothers. The N.K.V.D. dare not suppress Caridad for fear that her son, Trotsky's assassin, will talk. And they dare not suppress him, for fear of the mother. Such is the vicious circle.

Caridad lived in Mexico under a false name, from October, 1944 to November, 1945. She maintained continuous contact with her son. She saw that he lacked nothing, and pulled wires, with the aid of a skilful lawyer and a judge, to try to plead "legitimate defence" and so to obtain an important reduction in the sentence of twenty years and a day.¹

She has now been in Paris for nearly three years with her eldest son and her daughter, Montserrat. But she is working with a committee of N.K.V.D. agents in Mexico. These agents are well paid and ride about in motor cars. Their sole job consists in attending to—and watching over—Trotsky's assassin. I should add that the organisation of the assassination of the ex-chief of the Red Army, help for the assassin, and the present maintenance of the N.K.V.D. in Mexico

¹ When "a day" is added to a sentence of twenty years it means that the full time must be served.

have cost Moscow the pretty little sum of 600,000 dollars. Stalin considers them well spent. To him, to his totalitarian tyranny, the death of Leon Trotsky is worth that and much more.

JULIAN GORKIN.

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